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P'an Ku

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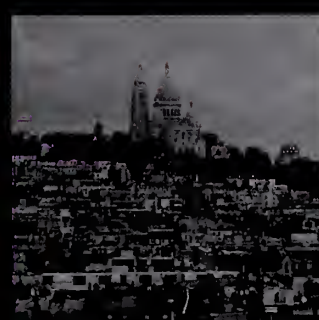
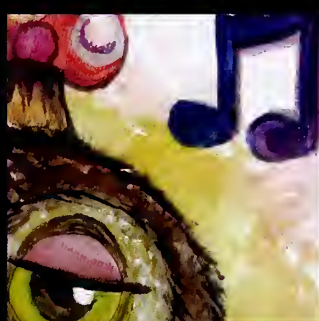
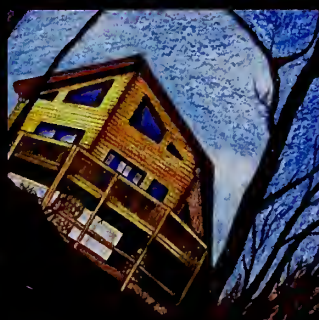
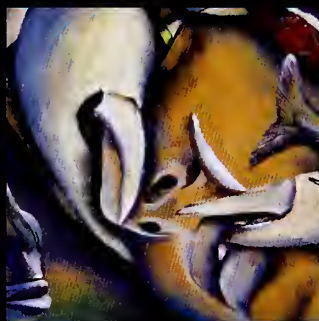
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Disengagement
Stephannie Benhamu
Etching

Echoes of the Son

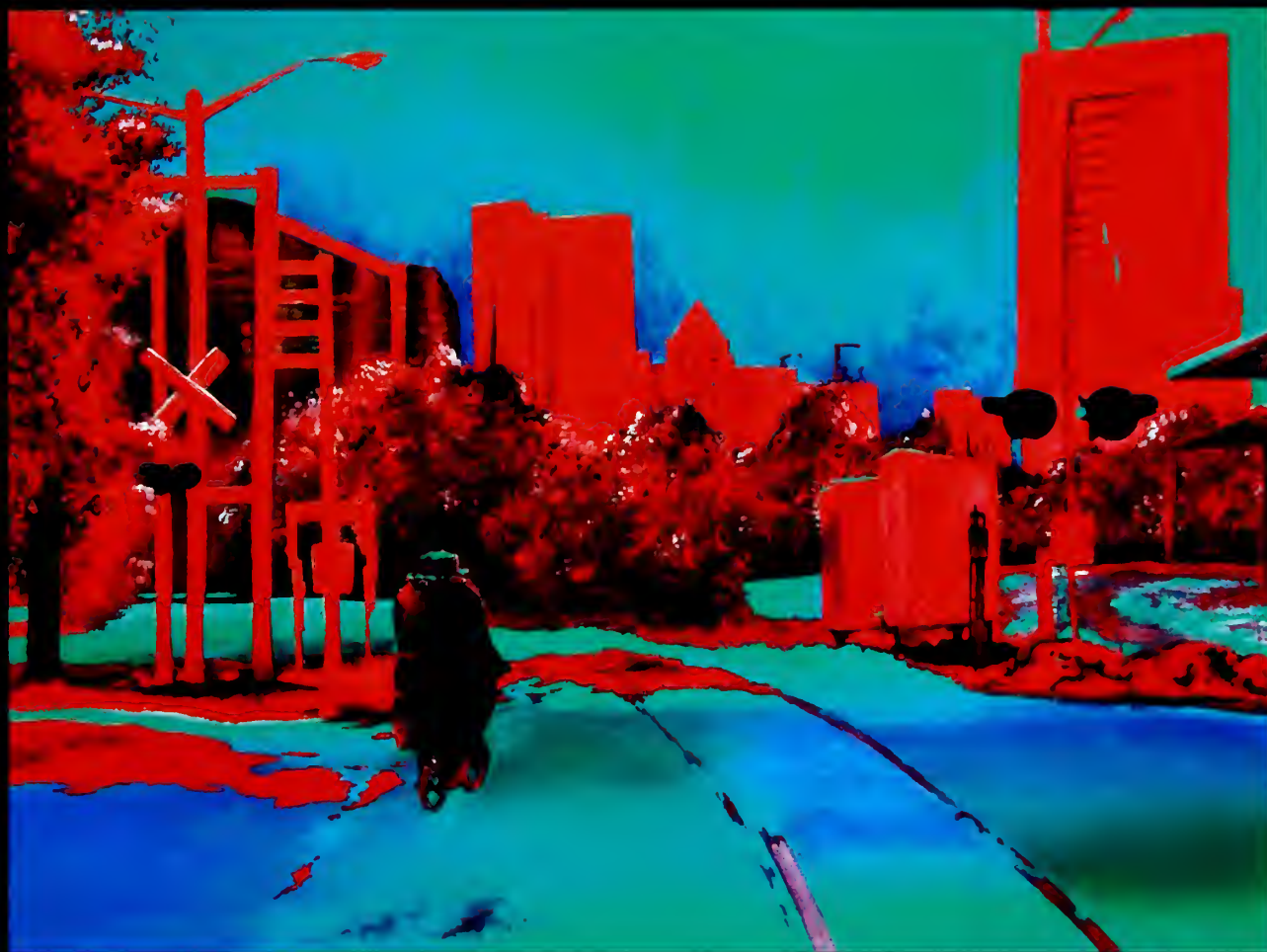
by Chris Garces

Imagination irrelevant,
There are things from this that you will not understand.
You will not feel the fear of men with hatred in their hands,
And you will not see the man before you fall.
You will not hear the scream before the death,
With his dark eyes left open to oblivion,
And his horror of the impossible unspoken.
His blood will not stain your shirt,
Nor his mother need the support of your arms.
His memory will not become yours,
And his name will never be known to you.
Because he was not a soldier,
Dying for the dream of his home beloved.
He was merely the man who saved my life in forfeit of his own.

Nocturnal Capital

by Vit Benton

Center on a town
At night the stars are held by tape
Never letting go
Of any chance to escape
Paper airplanes and cars
Then we knew where we stood
Being tested to perform
For the rest of the world to look
In a town like this
No maintenance needed to be
done
Cutting the shapes of buildings
And the icons we become
Scented with a hint of identity
The rest is made of glass
A nice world for us to live in
With lines we dare not pass
This was the last love battle
An end that was only a start
A moon revolving on a string
Powered by the beat of a heart
Crossing no ocean, but only land
Papers against the current
Spiraling stairs to the next floor
Your shortcuts drawn, you
weren't...



Por El Camino
Carla Mulieri
Acrylics on canvas

From Behind the Window, Latched

by A.J. Leigh

If I could, I'd give to you an orchestra,
layers of sound and painted strings to decorate the pit.
Violins fashion misery into melody
so maybe you'll dance with me
beneath the stairs,
where no light can pierce the musty wood.

Or... we could abandon music and melody
to sit among the cobwebs and dust,
deaf to a world held together by *noise*.

Let's admire the spooky landscape,
safe behind the window, latched.

If I could, I'd give to you a fun house,
mirrors splintered,
noise crafted by gypsies to capture your reflection,
taut and frail...

But even magicians weaving plastic into glass
can't erase ruby scratches,
cracked lips,
sunken eyes.

A hall of mirrors casting ghostly beauty on the walls
won't make you see scars
as poetry divine.

If I could, I'd steal you from the cobwebs and dust,
that fun house cage.
We could journey outside the window latched,
live off stale dew and rotten berries.
We could bear the mournful whispers,
monsters and the noise
as bodies on a midnight run,
hiding from damaged faith.



Pentagon

Luis Eduardo Guisasola
Silver Gelatin



Jason's Cars

you can't smother these thoughts (so stop trying)

by Christina Batista

she lies there, stretched
across the too short
bed, nose and
stomach and feet
exposed in defiant
silence as they
nakedly challenge
the limitations of
an ever-present ceiling.
and it is there that
she will place her
hand above her heart
and pledge

allegiance to a love that
gently licks the seal of
the envelope carrying
handwritten love
letters halfway across
the dying world.
and she sings to the
republic of love that slowly
penetrates the black-stained
lines that divide
brothers and create
enemies, binding each
nation to the other in



Daniel Mintz
Digital Photography

the sweet revelation of
our shared humanity.
and as she lies
there, eyes closed and
breathing in the
air of self-assured
determination,
she prays for a
community, united
under a waiting
God
who has never once
forsaken,
but has been effectively

drowned
underneath the
close-minded
shouts of patriotism
and one-sided
calls for blessing.
and she waits,
dreaming
of a world where
children
will point adults in the
right direction and
where love can
reign,

delivering its
promises of
peace and equality
for all
with an intimate
embrace.
and she will not
budge
until the world
aches
with the pain of her
frozen limbs
and finally decides
to change.



Martikitini
Donna Wisneski
Stoneware



Animal House
Dan Duarte
Digital Art

drink up, baby, and leave the cup empty

by Christina Batista

i'll sit here and
retrace
the coffee stains
that now push me
away
with their
half-
broken frowns.
and when i
close
my eyes, tight
enough to see red
spots,
i can pinpoint the bright
mornings
when they used to
smile
up at me, a
reflection
of your teasing
glances,
that filled my nose
with pungent
hope,
and itching fingers,
that sought a
home
in my waiting
hands.
but as my hands
cry out
for the touch that, now,

never
comes, i've found that
the frayed
crusts
of aged bread linger
in my mouth,
an aftertaste
of our growing
distance.
and i'll just keep
sitting
here, trapped in
sleepless
nights that constantly
soak
in the remnants
of our solemn
resignation,
knowing that,
even in the
foolish
moments when i
wish
for the coffee
stains
to be whole again,
they'll only
keep
fading.



Death of a Replicant
Catherine Castoro
Acrylic

Let's Make Love in this Market Place

by Daniel Amor

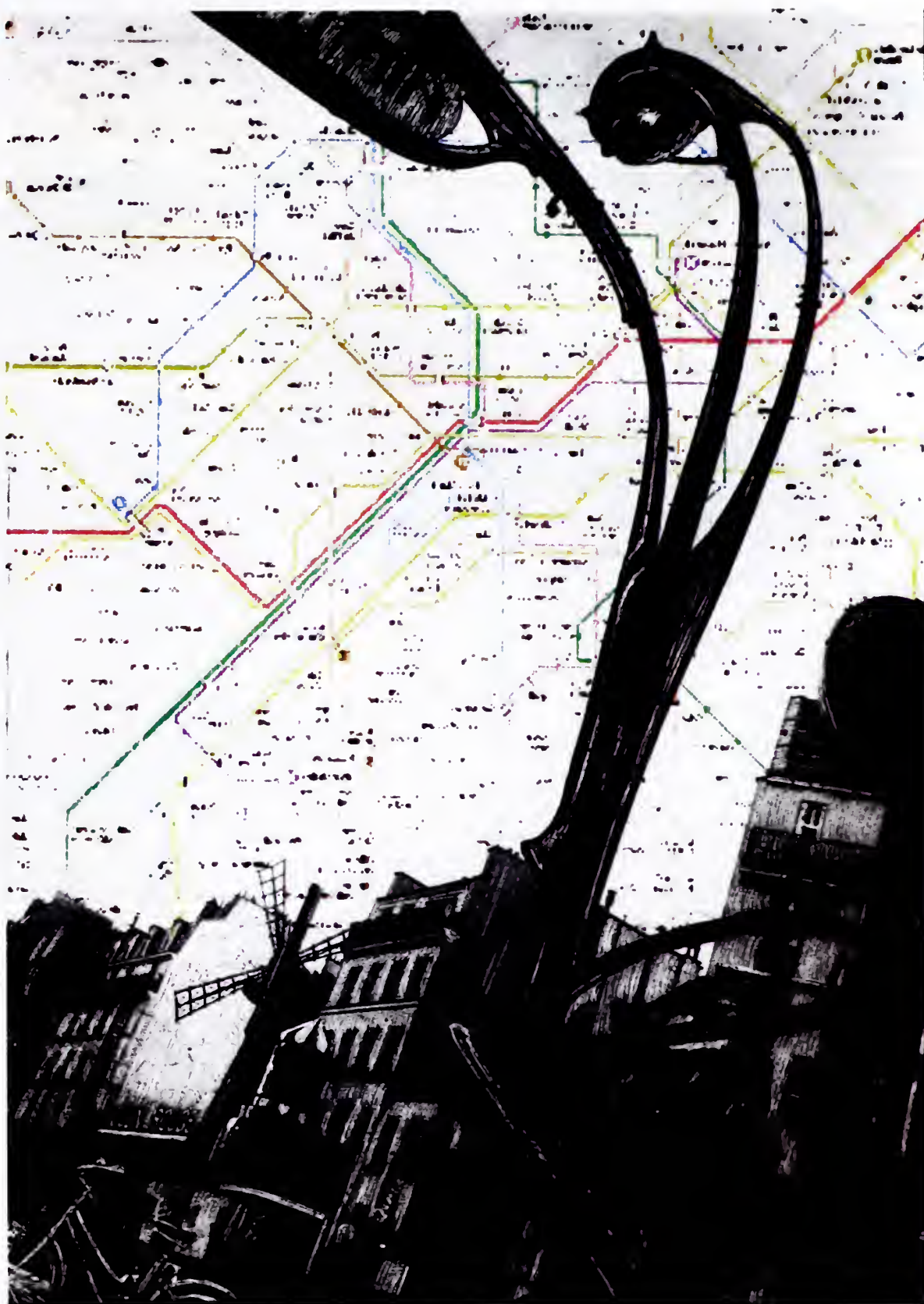
I was just a kid, so the first thing I did was stare...
in admiration of its shape and with curiosity as to how
there was so much juice in there.

I gently placed my nose onto her edible skin, testing
her purity because my boys would tell me all the time
about a few of their incidents.

The more I caressed her ripe, plump body,
the more anticipation flowed through me.
And that zest she possessed was the best! So, I
asked to test...

"I want to put my anxious, rose colored lips on your
fruit Ma'am! I plan to devour everything inside your
fruit cans!" I blame my ardor! My ardor blames my
hormones!

But "59 CENTS! 59 CENTS!" later,
I was running away with all her mangos.



Paris Metro
Michele Kietz
Solar Plate

Thoughts of a Mad Man

by Oliver Bulfango

Insignificant upbringings leading to significant thoughts and one's sense of self,
Conglomeration of emotions shaping each other's stability trying to find homeostasis,
Vindictive remarks and actions obliterating the concept of humanity,
Lifeless forms of incoherent form sanity through its insanities,
Finding meaning in existence through nonexistence,
Understanding a particular inkling, solely, hinders the very nature of understanding,
Egotistical behaviors lost in a socializing world losing a true sense of sociological growth,
Creating a peaceful world through warmongers as examples of non-peace.

These are the thoughts of a mad man whose sanity is breached by humanity's insanities.
Uncontrollable diarrhea of philosophical ideologies,
Losing the self for the greater good of the collective consciousness,
Knowing love exists as a childish feeling hidden behind barriers of conflictual experiences,
Revealing a truth of materials dictating human behaviors and not vice versa,
Creating a means to end this confusion only to be outcasted by the status quo,
Connecting the puzzle pieces of history and contemporary knowledge only to show its cyclical insanity,
Insightful theories of the egotistical path of science hindering the discoveries of the true nature of science itself,
Admitting to humanity as a dysfunctional family trying its best to understand each other's perspectives.

These are the thoughts of a mad man whose loneliness is a product of pure antagonistic revelations.
These are the thoughts of a mad man who is driven to the reality of which only a few are a part of.
These are the thoughts of a mad man who comforts himself with discomforts.
These are the thoughts of a mad man who is willing to be insane relative to social sanity.
These are the thoughts of a mad man....
These are the thoughts of a mad man....



The Day the World Went Away

Whitney Johnston
Digital Photography



F'n Metal Pt. 2
Nery Mejicano III
Block Print

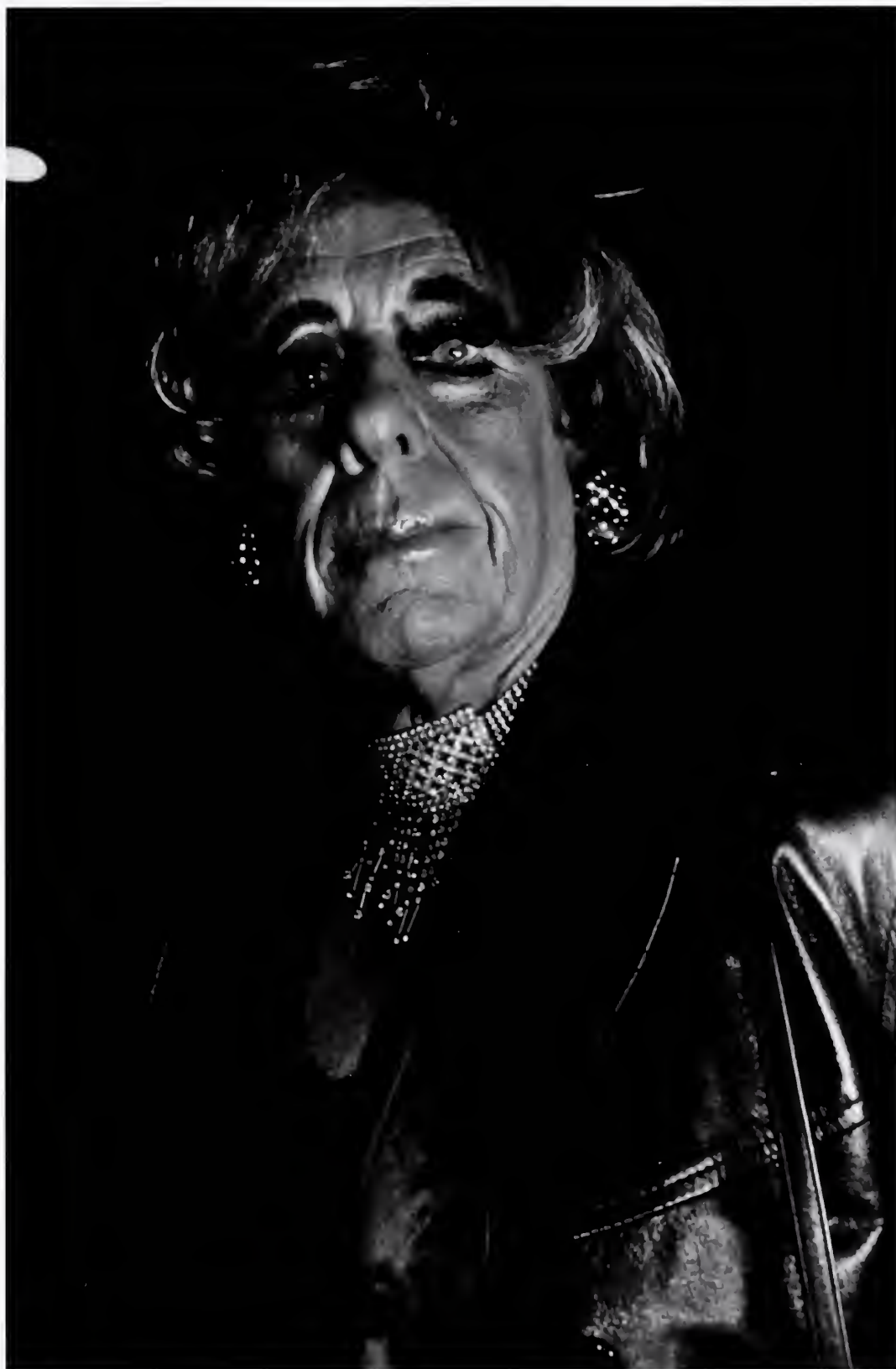


Lioness
Elvis Bello
Digital Art



Willie

Andres Ramirez
Black & White Photography



Untitled
Benny Mercader
Silver Gelatin

ARTHUR DONAHUE by Milo

I sit on the balcony and puff lightly on a cigarette, staring out at the park. I watch moms chase their kids around, smiling. The laughter is musical. The leaves have changed. They are bright yellow now. They are scattered in the small park. Some leaves fall over the happy families as they play.

I miss Ben. His ninth birthday was last month. I imagine us in the park together. We're playing hide and seek. He's easy to find. He always hides in the trees. He loves to climb. Gabriel watches us from a bench, while he reads the paper. He shouts, "Red Gun Rodeo is playing at the Vic next week."

I smile and blow him a kiss before I pull Ben out of his hiding spot. "Gotcha!"

A man catches my attention and snaps my daze. He is wearing navy blue slacks with a brown blazer and mismatched shoes. His grey hair is not well groomed, nor is his beard. He is obviously homeless. He sits on a bench, just outside the park. He takes a roll of crackers out from his blazer. He carefully crumbles the crackers and spreads them along the sidewalk. The pigeons swarm from out of sight, and he laughs as they attack the crumb-covered walkway. It makes me smile. I watch the homeless man from my window for three weeks.

As I leave work, I see him. We are downtown, about four miles from my neighborhood. He is wearing different clothes, but I recognize his face. I recognize his smile. He is wearing a heavy jacket. His shoes are dilapidated. Duct tape holds one together. "Excuse me, sir..."

He turns to me with an enchanting smile. "Such a beautiful voice. Surely, you can't be talking to me."

"Thank you." I giggle. I feel like a child talking to this stranger. He breaks me of my normal bitterness and contempt.

"Sir—"

"Please, call me Art."

"Okay, Art." I giggle again. "Art, I can't help

but notice those horrible shoes on your feet."

"Oh yes." He smiles as he lifts his foot, revealing a dangling sole.

"Well, it's almost winter, and I'd like to buy you a proper set of boots to help you get through the cold."

"That's very kind of you, but my mother always told me not to take candy from strangers." We both laugh.

I extend my hand. "I'm Alima. It's a pleasure to meet you."

He shakes my hand. His hand is cold and hard; it feels like stone; it is rough.

"Alima. Such a beautiful name. Do you know where your name comes from?"

"Yes," I say, with buoyancy. "It's Hebrew for strong."

Art smiles. "Very good. I once knew a beautiful young lady, when I was fighting in the war. Her name was Alima. You don't find that often."

"Especially not in the U.S.," I add.

"Alima, I would be honored if you would be kind enough to buy this old clunker a new pair of boots."

I walk with Art to the nearest shoe store. He talks about the weather. He talks about the pigeons by the park. I tell him that I've been watching him feed them. "So, I have an admirer," he jokes. He tells me about the Army. He even gets a little teary-eyed when he mentions the close friends he lost. He shows me the dog tags around his neck. He wears his own, along with his cousin who died in his arms. He asks me why I'm not married. I tell him about Gabriel and Ben. I cry for a bit, and Art apologizes for asking. I tell him it's okay. But it's not. It's hard for me to talk about, especially with a homeless man whom I've just met.

Snow falls gently from the clouds. Art still sits at the bench, but the birds have all flown south. He now feeds himself the crackers that once lined the walkway. He huddles up in layered

“ALIMA, I WOULD
BE HONORED IF YOU
WOULD BE KIND
ENOUGH TO BUY THIS
OLD CLUNKER A NEW
PAIR OF BOOTS.”

jackets, covered by his large overcoat. His boots are bright tan. I watch him for a few minutes. I watch his breath. Shallow. He holds himself tight. He rubs his torso. He has a small cup that he occasionally holds out, asking for change. I finish my cigarette and walk downstairs.

“Art!” I call from across the street. He sees me and waves; his smile is warm enough to melt the snow. He is slow to stand, yet he walks across to greet me.

“My dear, sweet Alima. What a nice surprise.”

“I was just about to make dinner. Why don’t you come in and join me?”

“You are too kind, young lady.” His voice is fragile and hoarse.

I serve kielbasa with cabbage and mushrooms. Art is delighted. “I haven’t eaten this since the forties, when I was stationed in Poland.”

“My grandmother’s Polish. She taught me how to make it. I was actually named after her. Terenya Alima Nowak. Everybody called her Alima.”

Art looks very perplexed, as if I have said something wrong.

“Are you okay?”

His gaze drops to his plate, and he slowly stabs at his food and places it in his mouth. He chews, slowly. He doesn’t look at me.

“Art?”

He looks up, still chewing.

“Are you okay?”

He swallows, wipes his mouth, and takes a sip of wine. “I once knew a young lady named Alima, when I fought in the war,” he finally says.

“I know. You told me that when we met.”

“Of course. Well, I think that young lady... my friend from a long time ago... I think my friend... is your grandmother.”

We are both silent; we sit in this silence for what feels like eternity.

“I would very much like to see her, if I could.”

“I’m sorry, Art, but she passed away years ago.” I watch his eyes well up. Tears slowly creep from the outer corners and pass down his wind burnt cheeks.

“I’m sorry to hear that.”

“Me too.”

“Well, thank you very much for dinner. I appreciate everything that you’ve done for me, Alima. Like your grandmother, you are a kind and generous person.”

He slowly stands and walks around the table. His cold, rough hand delicately lifts mine. He kisses it. I stand and give him a long, unyielding hug.

“It’s my pleasure,” I say to him.

I haven’t seen Art in weeks. I’m worried. Thick snow blankets the city. Icicles dangle from the naked trees. The sky is grey and menacing. I ask the neighbors if anyone has seen the old man who sits on the bench. They know him but have not seen him. Maybe he’s found shelter for the winter. Maybe he’s found a home. I pray for him at temple. I pray for him at home.

An envelope arrives from Art. The return address is Illinois Masonic Hospital. I’m stricken with distress. My hands shake as I slowly open the envelope. Inside is an old picture. The edges are damaged and stained. A young soldier and his wife are holding their baby. The soldier looks like Art. The young woman looks nothing like grandma Alima. I turn the picture over. It reads: “SETH’S 1st BIRTHDAY.” I don’t have an Uncle Seth. If the woman in this picture is Art’s Alima, then she’s not my grandmother. He’s just a crazy old homeless man. I want to find him, regardless.

CONTINUED

I run out of the house, forgetting my coat. The icy wind is harsh. I take a cab to the hospital.

"I need to see a patient." I plea to the lady at the front desk. I am frantic; she is calm.

"What's his name, ma'am?"

"Art... I don't know. He goes by Art."

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but I need a last name or something. That's just not enough. Who are you?"

"He's homeless. He's my grandfather, sort of."

A young nurse puts his hand on the back of my arm. I turn with tears in my eyes.

"I might know whom you're talking about," he says to me.

"He usually hangs out around Oz Park." I hold up the picture. "This picture is very old, but he looks the same."

"Yeah, that's Art. Arthur Donahue."

I'm relieved but still frantic. "What room is he in? Can I see him?"

"I'm sorry, miss. Art passed away a few days ago. He had pneumonia."

The walk home is long. The walk home is cold. I cry the entire way. I don't think about Art. Instead, I think about Gabe and Ben. As I walk past the park, I see them. They are playing in the snow, throwing snowballs at each other, laughing. I smile a bit, but it doesn't stop the tears. Gabe sees me. I mouth, "I love you." He smiles and winks before Ben hits him with another snowball. For a moment, I'm warm. A frigid wind blasts me back into reality. The park is empty and dark. The benches are blanketed by soft snow. The street lights smolder, dim amber and flickering. Cold air and the faint smell of beer and cigarettes from the nearby pub engulf me. Wind howls in my ears, lifts my hair, tickles my neck. Its icy fingers send chills down my spine. Gradually, I make my way back home. Alone. Again.



The Holocaust Memorial 1933-1945
Sculptor: Kenneth Treister, FAIA

The Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach was dedicated in memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. It was opened to the public in February 1990. Since then, it has been a cultural and educational place for the community. Memorials express, in photographs and sculpture, the history and sorrow of the Holocaust so future generations will never forget.

Photo by: Marinovich Tatiana



Mother Earth
Javier Chavarro
Etching

Borderline Personality Disorder

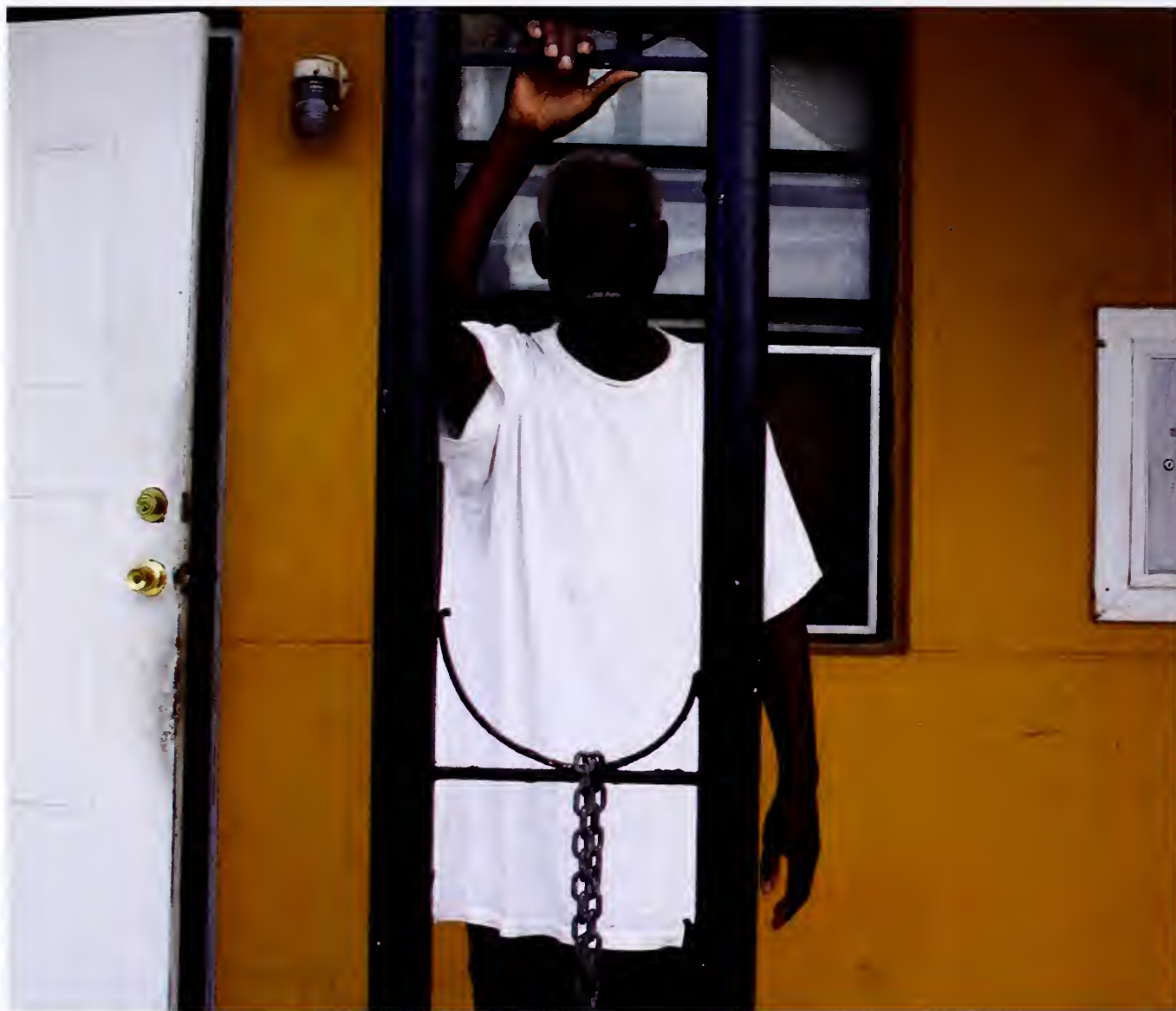
by Whitney Johnston

Take me out.
Paint the town red.
Damn-it bitch,
get out of my head.
Good-bye today.
Hello tomorrow.
Can't you give me peace
to wallow in my sorrow.
Won't shed a tear
over a day.
I want you.
I miss you.
Please go away.
Two different people
trying to win a fight.
I'll see you in the morning.
Don't call me tonight.
Why does it seem
like the joke's all on me?
When will I ever
be happy and free?
Hello world,
I am fresh meat.
With or without you
I will never be
complete.

Small Blue Diamonds

by Bran

We wear two faces,
I was two faces,
After the change,
The other faded.
I know only joy,
While the world falls apart,
I can't stop smiling.
I think how arrogant I must be,
To be happy,
To think this is me.
The monster inside,
Living in a prison of happiness.
Can I fight the evil face of my own free will?
It tells me no!
Too weak to fight.
Now diamonds are your best friend.
Small blue diamonds.



Untitled
Ashley Bland
Digital Photography

Melodyne

by Jonathan King

Sitting alone in a dark empty room...
Time is flawed, but I can still hear the clock tick.
Music is my only friend now, and my only friend is terminally sick.
Beaten and battered, she fights to stay alive within our minds,
But countless times, we draw the blinds
And blur the lines, between our time
And what fragments of our souls we've left behind.

I'm losing sight of it,
Not my dreams but the purpose they once seemed to have...

Reality isn't harsh, it's bleak...
Every child left on the street,
Every family with nothing to eat,
It's the ravages of dreams that keep our hopes held in between.

We all know we'll make it some day,
With a nice job and good pay,
But god forbid we try it our way...
The only way to conquer dreams is to watch them fade away...

Sitting alone in a dark empty room, just my thoughts and me.
Looking back on what now seems just a blur...
Music was the only one that was always there for me,
And I'm no longer there for her.



Hoot Hoot
Michael Reiter
Water Color

Dreamland

by Dániel Amor

In Dreamland, you breathe the sweetest air. In Dreamland, you live, and you are free. You are free to do as you please, soaring above clouds and above cities. There are colors so vivid, so real. There are people, people like me, who come here to escape, people like me who come here to breathe and feel. In Dreamland, there are no questions, just answers. Dreamland is where broken people live and set themselves free.

I must warn you, though: don't sleep for too long, or you'll be stuck, forever living in Dreamland. Though the clouds are made of cotton candy, though the grass is made of chocolate and the air is made of love, Dreamland is not where you want to forever live. Dreamland is where you break free for a couple of hours, and if you dare get sucked in for too long, Dreamland won't let you back out. You must escape when you get the chance; you must set yourself free because Dreamland won't let you be. It will only let you see.

Dreamland is where reality falls apart and actuality is found out. As we speak, I am falling into Dreamland, where I will become someone other than myself. In Dreamland, you can forget about your past and free your imagination. This is where you can become a better person, erase your mistakes and start over. This is the place where you find your inner being and explore the memory of your mind. You can create monsters and heroes here. You can discover the earth and the waters that will drink you and spit you back out. Dreamland is where art is made and beauty is beholden.

It is forbidden to ask questions in Dreamland. There is a law in this world, a rule, and you must abide by it. If you don't, you'll fall into the forever. Though it is so beautiful here, you wouldn't want to stay for a lifetime because Dreamland is just a tease. It's only supposed to help you make it through the day and put a smile on your face. So absorb all the energy here and fly away like I do. Dreamland is an escape from the world, an

escape from the people that drive us insane. We find peace in Dreamland. But you have to remember that Dreamland doesn't last for long.

Welcome to *Dreamland*.

■

I press my back against the soft patch of green grass that's been kissed by the blazing sun, and I thank God for this wonderful place. On my hands and knees, I lift my head up to the sun and blow a kiss to the pink-blueberry sky. It smiles back at me, and I stand on my two feet, waiting for change. There are people here with me, waiting, and it's coming. When I first fell into Dreamland, I wasn't sure where I was. I wasn't sure if it was real. But it is.

On my first day here, I was alone. No one else was here but the sun and the trees that whispered my name as they swayed against the wind. I remember falling into Dreamland and looking up at the sun. I remember the feel of the wet dew on the fresh grass. I love the feeling of the earth against my skin. It all feels so real. It all feels so new; it's change.

There is nothing but earth here, nothing but flowers, beautiful blooming daises. Today is my second day in Dreamland, and I'm not ready to ever leave again. Right now, I'm not sure if this is real yet. Though I've learned so much about this amazing, mysterious place, it's still a daze, a wonder. I stand up and reach for one of the daises, and when I pull it out of the ground, as though I were taking a life, the earth unravels. That's when I realize that I am in fact in Dreamland, because there is no way Florida can shake its hips like that.

The earth is moving, plates are shifting. My head throbs, and my body quakes. I steady myself and hold on for dear life. Then I am running through the green meadow; tall weeds cut me, slice me open; I bleed. I don't care anymore; the faster I run the more pain I can leave behind, and when it's gone, it's gone. I search frantically for

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the tree, the tree that took me when I first came here. I need help, guidance maybe, so I speak. I open my mouth and doves fly out of me, and I remember who I am. In Dreamland, your last name represents who you are. When I reach the tree, the sweet apple tree, my voice is lying on the floor waiting for me. I take it and unwrap it. It looks like joy, lying in the palm of my hand, an upright smile that tastes bittersweet. It's addictive, like novocaine; this is my drug here.

"Hello?" I say this aloud and hear my echo in the distance. So I follow it, and when I near my voice I stop. This is the first stop in Dreamland; this is where you meet your fellow dreamers. This is still a nightmare to me because I've never had dreams like this. I've never felt inside my dreams; I was always on the outside. But in Dreamland, I can feel everything. In Dreamland, I can hear everything on the outside. What I've been trying to escape from has now caught up with me, and I try to shut it out.

The voices get louder and louder until I can make them out. I hear my mother, the woman of mind and memory. She is screaming, and she is upset. My father, he is enraged, full of fiery and anxiety. This is what sends me to Dreamland. The screaming is my plane ticket here. I cover my ears and open my mouth and question Dreamland. My eyes shut immediately. Dreamland grabs me now, and I am running. A hand encloses around my own, and it's damp. I feel rain, and when I open my eyes and lift my face the clouds are pitch black. "*Ashlyn*," this mysterious stranger whispers in my ear, and I turn to greet him. He lets go of me, and I am standing on sand and crystals. The ocean breathes in and out. He stands waiting for me, his back turned away from me. I approach him suddenly, and he breathes.

"Do you know who you are?" he asks, and his voice is so sweet, so addictive. He faces me now, and this male specimen, he is one of a kind. My feet begin to sink into the sand as I gaze at his beauty. He reaches out for me, and I grab hold of his hand. His wrist is marked with a dove, and I look into his eyes. When he smiles at me, the rest of the earth falls apart. The ocean slowly disappears, and I breathe the sweet air.

"I'm... *Ashlyn*," I say softly, and he shakes his head. His auburn hair falls over his eyes. He pushes it back with one hand and blinks twice, then we are gone. We are sitting in a tree. His

arm is wrapped around my waist like a snake, and I breathe heavily, horrified.

"You are the dream, *Ashlyn*," he whispers this in my hair, and he covers my eyes for a brief moment. When he uncovers them, I am watching the world move by. "*Dream*," he commands.

I do as I'm told, and when I blink, it all falls apart. My eyes click shut. I try to open them, but I'm stuck. He grabs hold of me as I begin to slip, but he can't help me anymore; Dreamland is taking me. I am falling, into the forever. This is a test; this is a battle that I must fight. I try to find my way out, but I don't remember how to use my legs. When I fall into the ocean of dreams, I am gasping for air, reaching for his hand, but it slips from mine. My body descends slowly into the pit of dreams, and I am slowly falling away. I must grasp onto life; I must hold onto Dreamland, so I open my eyes and dream with them open.

"What's your name?" I ask him as I break through the surface. He pulls me up out of the water, and the waves crash around us. This time when he blinks, doves pass us by. They fly all around us, and I remember his wrist, the dove marked on his skin. These doves surround us and then disappear, slowly fading away into the already falling earth. He lifts my chin and looks out at the scenery. The grass is a pool of chocolate, and the clouds begin to weep. I feel the drizzle as Dreamland begins to cry, and as it does, love falls from the sky; my heart beats frantically. I catch my breath in my throat when he whispers, "*Jonah*." And I gaze into his eyes, his glimmering emerald green eyes.

"That's my last name," I reply, and he opens up the palms of his hands. A single dove flies out and perches itself on my shoulder. I reach for it and grab onto who I am. The dove looks at me as I cradle it in the palm of my hand, and I smile and close my eyes. I am swimming into the ocean of my dreams; I am forever in Dreamland. It has taken me, and I cannot grasp myself because I am amazed with it; I am in love with it!

Jonah catches me, and I shake my head because I do not want to be caught. He shakes me violently, but it doesn't hurt me. What hurts me is the dove that's perched on his shoulder, with its brown eyes. "Listen to me, *Ashlyn*, you must leave."

"I don't want to." My eyes close for a brief moment as I breathe in this drug. This world is

an addiction, and I am the addict who will never heal. I am the broken glass bottle. "Why can't I stay here? Isn't it a rule for me to stay here if I question you?"

He nods his head and blinks twice. We are on the sand, listening to the ocean breath. The air smells like salt water, and I taste this on my tongue. I dip my feet into the water and beg for dreams.

"I have power here. I can pull anyone out of the forever if I want to." He turns me to face him, "But *I know you*. You mustn't stay here."

"But this is my escape. I can't go back there." And I show him why by opening the portal to reality to let him watch. He watches the brokenness of my mother, and he watches my father sulk over her love, the love she no longer gives.

"You need to open your eyes. You have to save him."

"Save who? Isn't this supposed to be my time? This is *my dream*!"

"No, Ashlyn, it's not." He is slowly fading away. I watch this marvelous change as he forms into what I cannot yet, and I watch as he disappears, going back into reality. He is gone, and I will not see him until dreams permit. I call out his name and scream for him, but no one responds. Dreamland, instead, decides to swallow me whole. It folds up and wraps around me, warming, protecting and freeing. This is where I need to be, but I must return to my home. So I close my eyes and let Dreamland take me. I fly away to the exit, open the door and wait for reality to take me then break me.



Italian Pathway

George Lyon
Solar Plate



The Nurse Who Loved Me

Whitney Johnston

Black & White Photography

The Girl on the Flying Trapeze

by Abbigail Perkins

I used to picture myself, the girl on the flying trapeze.
The one who stopped the crowd with unthinkable flips
and upside down tricks, with dazzling costumes of frill and lace.
I'd climb the ever-towering ladder to the highest swing and dangle,
unhinged and free.
Up there, I would be noticed.
Up there, if I fell, crushing my limbs, scattering bloody dirt onto the faces
of the wind-up dolls in the audience, I'd at least skip a heartbeat or two.
With a breath, icy, smelling of sequins and elephant sweat,
I'd swing from the top of the tent across the vast three-ringed theater.

A thousand eyes shall follow me as I swing back and forth,
While oohs and ahhs leave the lips of every beholder.
The clowns, with their powdered skin and eyes painted red, clap hands
and laugh in uncontrollable anxiety.
The Bengal tigers roar in the deaf ears of the paying customers who are blind to the
cries, unconscious to blackened tears, washing their hands of the ball and chain.
Chaos is unwilling,
yet, I'd still be swinging,
the girl on the flying trapeze,
the girl with her head to her knees.
She ends with a bang, confetti for brains.



Let's Play Telephone

Kathryn McAlpin
Pastel

bite the habit

by Terese Caruso

your mouth is like a python.
lips that contort and twist,
as you shed your skin.

teeth hidden,
pygmy-sized vampires folded within.
a slithering tongue,
changing direction and form;
curving and cascading down to your core—
the pit of your stomach,
where venom and gall reside:
buried treasure.

your lips curl,
and your mouth transforms
to fit the mold of your prey.

CANCER

by Pier Mercer

It came.
It's eating me away, quietly, deviously.
I'm unaware.
I'm healthy, strong and alive.

It's eating my emotions, my mind,
My soul.
It's invading my life.
It's invading others now...

Cancer is spreading,
In my body, in my family,
To my children, to my friends.

Cancer— I am afraid of you.
You are paralyzing me.
You are forcing me to look death
In the face.
I cannot ignore its eyes,
Piercing a hole in my serenity.

I'm insane.
I'm going crazy.
And I am alone.

I wish I could be free and happy.
My life is invaded— it's ruined.

I have to fight you;
I'm tired now.

I must win.
You can't win.
I'm crying, I'm drowning
I'm dying...

Do you hate me Cancer?
Why me? Why now?
Who sent you?

I am still.
My world is over; it is gone.
You take, you take, and you take.

They raise money and do research
To kill you Cancer.
Stop knocking on doors, on my door.
I give up cancer— you win.

The stillness creeps;
The nausea persists.

I give you my life,
All of it.

Then I see them...
They're coming for you Cancer,
The drugs, the IV drip, the doctors.
They've found you, they've staged you.
Hide Cancer, run Cancer.
I dare you to return.

I accept you Cancer;
I want to be your friend;
I want to love you;
I want you to be my gift.

Thank you Cancer.
You came and went.
I promise I won't change back
To anger, to hatred, to violence,
To weakness, to genes gone wrong,
To the puzzle, to the labyrinth.

Thank you Cancer;
You've changed me;
I've grown;
I'm brave, I'm tough,
I'm humbled to Life— to Darkness.

Cancer, I know now that you are a gift
To remind me about
Love and Life worth living,
And family and jewels
And time and solitude
And love and people
And me.

Cancer, It Came.
Cancer, It Left.



Paris

Vivienne Leibowich
Black & White Photography

The Day I Lost Myself

by Christina Batista

I made a promise to myself
Knowing that, should I break
It, the garden in my thoughts
Would wilt and decay,
Leaving not one seed behind:
See, no matter what you
Do, or how hard you try, with that
Scheming mind and the mouth that
Longs to toy with my perception,
I will not
Brush a hand upon the cheek
That begs for the tears to
Comfort her like a secret lover;
Not will I
Permit the eager tears their
Departure, not even as they burn
At the eyes and distort the visage;
For I will not
Allow the subtle weaknesses
Trapped inside this striving
Soul a way out;
Nor will I
Leave room for anyone to perceive
Me as the helpless victim.
And even as these thoughts
Begin to form, I can see it's too late;
Your poison has already slipped
In like a sleeping serpent and had
Tainted what was once my own.
And now I am no longer
My mother's daughter.
I am
my mother,
And the promise no longer stands.



Scavengers

Olga Dziembowska
Acrylics & Mixed Media on Canvas



Wagon Wheel
Luis Eduardo Guisasola
Silver Gelatin



Turtle Shell

Luis Eduardo Guisasola
Silver Gelatin



Born Free 3
Stephannie Benhamu
Solar Plate

Epitaph to the Semicolon

by Tera Bias

The capital letters and periods got together one day;
they called for the death of the semi-colon.

Two independent clauses joined together as one,
bah! Two of same cannot form one union.

Often misused by the grammatical ignorant,
those in the know have over-proofread.

The semicolon, a tool of masters, has now become formal;

in fun and in fiction, use a hyphen instead.

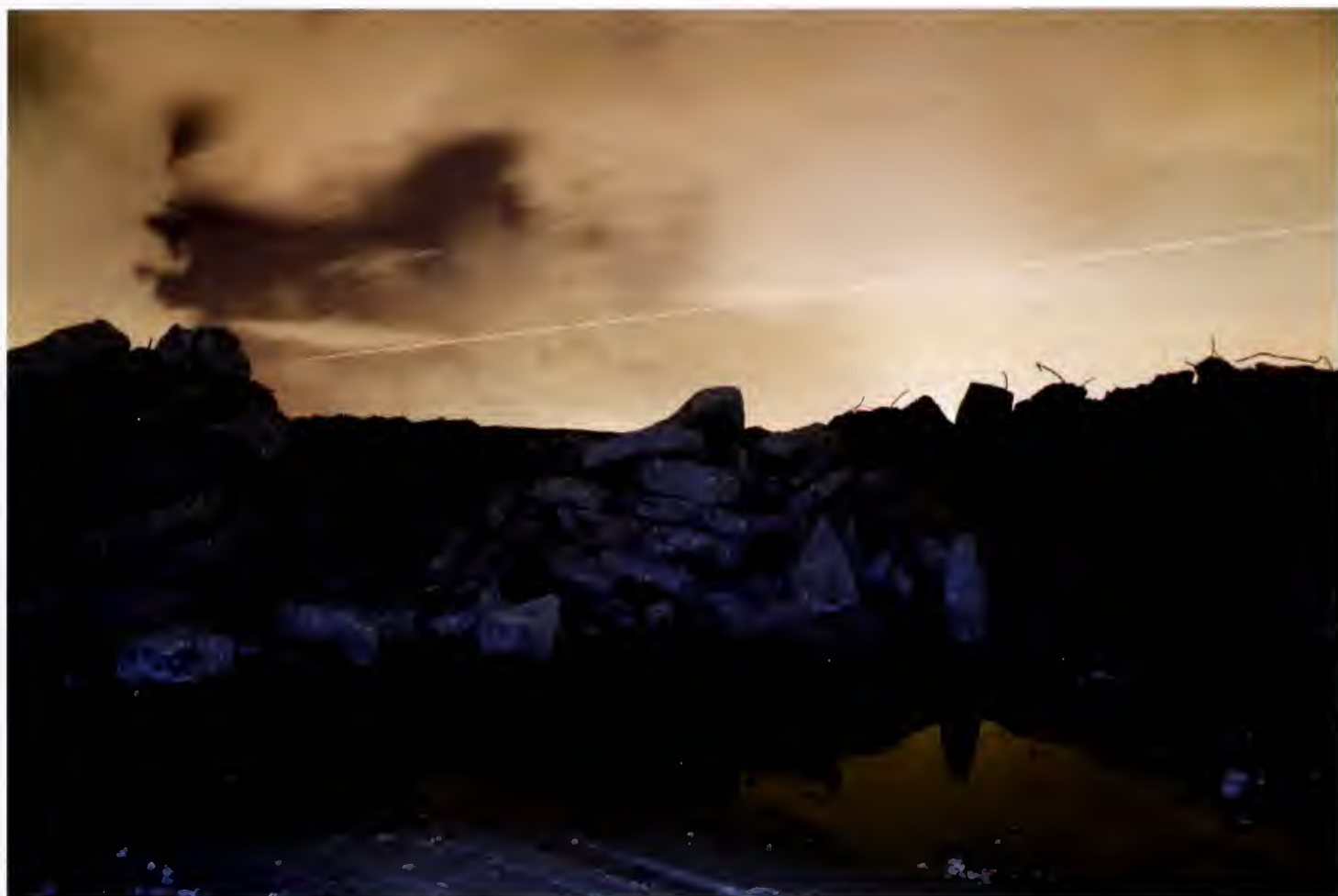
There are no rules –

Just put it where you feel.



Dead

Caroline AdamsClark
Digital Photography



Interplanetary
Stephannie Benhamu
Digital Photography

Butterfly

by Daniel Amor

There is a story waiting to be told. There is a secret waiting to be unfolded. It's buried inside me. These things are buried within my soul, within my brain, and within my heart. This story is of the butterfly, whose name happens to be Katrina Myers. I *am* the butterfly. The air I breathe is bitter; the air I breathe burns my skin. I am broken and bruised. The air I breathe is in the home of the beast. He is the reason I am dead. He is the reason I keep a secret of silence. He is the reason for the blood on my hands. Welcome to my story.

The butterfly migration begins in the fall of August. Leaves turn into fire and grass turns into dirt. Leaves fall from maple and oak trees as butterflies soar above us. Monarch butterflies- my favorite- are known for their famous migrations. From Mexico City to Southern California, they start off slow. They grow gracefully and bloom into beautiful flowers. Flowers you have never seen. They hang themselves from glass until they are ready to break free. When they do, they move freely, and they grace us with their beauty. I am a different butterfly. My wings are broken, and my predator is not a bird. My predator is a man. My predator is the beast.

When the migration begins, it's quite predictable. I wait for them at Sunnyvale Park. They approach me, and they dance with me. Their flapping wings can be heard from a miles away, and the sound, it is as sweet as milk. The sound is as beautiful as the monarchs are. There are millions of them that gather together and fly along, coast-to-coast, searching for a place where there is humid air and enough milkweeds to feed an army. You're probably wondering why I call myself the butterfly, why I've spent my entire life watching the migration. There's only one person that can tell you why, but he's not here anymore.

Maybe I'm dead, and this is hell. Have I looked death right in the eye without even knowing it? Maybe this is heaven, my heaven.

The one I created in my sick, twisted world. In the beast's mind, this is heaven; he is smiling, and he seems to savor the feeling of my nails digging his shoulder. I'm struggling to thrust him off of me, but my claws aren't working. He's too strong; there's no hope. There's a smile on his face, a mischievous, malicious grin. I keep screaming and screaming, but he won't stop. He won't let go of the butterfly. Free me! My mind screams. Stop it! It screams until it can't scream anymore. I become immobile, and my body begins to shake. My mouth is stitched shut, and I am numb. I try to close my eyes, but I'm locked in, squeezed within a tiny box the size of a living cell. There is a lock over the opening, the opening that will concede the beast's distressing secrets. I'm losing myself, and in the glimpse of an eye, there is death. He is dark, faceless, and he has come to take me because it is time for me to leave for my heaven. But death is the beast; the beast is death. I am gazing into his evil eyes, and now I know that he's not taking me to eternity. He's taking me to hell with him.

Do you remember the day you met your high school sweetheart? Or the day your mother took her first sip of alcohol? How about the day when your father gave you the butterfly locket then left you? Or the day your stepdad took your innocence away? Well I remember it. His secrets, I keep them; I hold them. You may ask why, and I will tell you the truth and nothing but the truth.

In order for the butterfly to keep her life, she must sacrifice her virtue. In order for me to see daylight, I must stitch my mouth shut and make a promise with the devil. What good will this bring? None, but I have been fighting it this way since the age of six. The beast's secret is safe, though. The only people that know are Nick and me. Who is Nick? Nick is, well, I'm not sure who Nick is. Maybe he's a figure of my imagination, my guardian angel sent from heaven to watch and protect me on earth. Nick is not just my friend, though; he's my *only* friend.

When I first fell in love with Nick's blue-green eyes, I was certain that there was no way I would end up with him. There was no possible way that he would be my first kiss, love, my hero, and my forever, but he is. Nick and I are very complicated, though. We don't see eye to eye at times, and his mother, she's against me, against my color, my race. Just like the beast is against

my freedom. If there is anything that the beast hates more than Nick's skin color, it's knowing that Nick is the key to my freedom. That tiny box I was squeezed into? Yea, Nick has the key, but the lock isn't on the box or on my butterfly locket. It's on his heart, and Nick is on my sleeve.

■

The taste of alcohol is so taintless, unpolluted like the Indian Ocean. My mother falls into a river of ecstasy at the honey-like taste. I watch her down a glass or two or three. I watch her lift the glass of Absolut vodka to her lips, and her eyes scream of insanity. The look in her eyes tells me that she is swimming towards her deathbed. "Stop!" I beg her. "Stop drinking!"

My mother is an alcoholic; she's been drinking since the day she gave birth to me. She is a strong woman, though; I can see the strength in her eyes. You can see the strength and suffrage that builds across her silky skin, even through the bruises on her arms and collar that she conceals with makeup. What my mother doesn't know is that you can't hide the pain, especially the pain across your face.

Mama cranes her neck and closes one eye to get a better look at me. As I watch her do this, my fingers dance along her collar, memorizing each and every bruise. Her face is pressed against the kitchen counter, and she's trying to reach for the last sip, the last deadly sip. This breaks my heart more than when Nick wasn't here to harbor me from danger.

"Stop it Angela!" I scream at her.

"Don't call me that." Her voice softens, and there are tears in her eyes. She reaches up and touches them with the tip of her finger. She takes a deep breath and lifts her head as she grabs onto the edge of her falling world. I reach out and grab her hand. She encloses it around mine, and my heart throbs violently.

"I hate what you've become," I whisper softly.

She opens her mouth to say *his* name, my father's name. The name I no longer know because he left twelve years ago. She sighs hopelessly, and I catch her in my arms and bring her over to the couch where I hold her until the sun rises. I hold her until the sunlight shines down upon her smooth caramel skin, beautiful skin like mine. She lifts her head and wipes the crust out of her eyes and asks where *Chris* is. I refuse to answer this because of who this man is.

Chris is the devil that took my life and has yet to return it. He is the beast, the one who ruined my life and broke my mother. Chris is not my father; he can never replace him. I hold back the hurtful words I have to say and let my fingers dance along my temple. They thaw my brain, trying to dig out the unerring words I wish to say. I wish my mother would open her eyes and see his true colors and what lies behind that sinister smile.

"I wish you would open your eyes Ma! I wish you could see him. I wish you could see *me*."

Mama falls onto the floor in a pool of tears and pounds her fists into the wooden floorboards. She lets her head fall onto the rug, and before I console her, I listen to her breathe heavily; I then move towards her, to hold her in my arms. Her heart beats in my hands, and her mind unfreezes. Memories infest her brain like a virus. "He left us, Katrina, years ago. He's gone... forever."

The butterfly locket swings back and fourth, and I remember my father holding it over my head and clasping it around my heart the day before he left. Mama and I sit there wrapped in each other's arms until I'm floating off into Nick's. I run for safety because the beast has returned, and he has lust in his eyes. It isn't until Nick kisses me that I remember to breathe. That's when I remember that tomorrow is Mama's birthday, and all she's asked from me is my protection.

■

The house is alive tonight; it's full of drunken people. They sway their hips, and the alcohol dances on their tongues. All around me beer cans clink, and Mama finds me through the crowd. Her smile is full of joy; I haven't seen that in a while. I watch as the beast slithers into the house like the evil snake he is. He smiles at me, and Mama puts her arm around my waist, begging me to join her in a dance to celebrate her new age. I pull away from her, and my eyes find their way to the ground because the beast has his eyes settled on my youth. I won't say anything to Mama; she yells at me, and I storm up into my room.

I busy myself with artwork, sketching out people who actually mean something to me. It isn't until I hear heavy feet against the floor that I find myself in hiding. I curl up in the darkness of my closet, wiping my sweaty palms on my jeans. I hold my breath. The footsteps get louder and

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louder until the door swings open, and my heart stops beating. I know the sound of his feet; I can smell him from inside the closet.

"Kitty you in here?" His raspy voice calls.

"Come on. I just wanna talk!" He groans like a child, and I know that this is not true.

That's what he said when I was six, and that was all a lie. The beast growls angrily and looks around in hope of finding his prey. He moans in anguish and finally gives up with a kick at the wall. I wait until I hear the bedroom door click, but before I pull the closet doors open, I rummage through my closet quickly and pull the hidden knife out the floor bed. I take a deep breath and cross my fingers. When I open the doors, there stands the beast, awaiting me, and he's hungrier than ever. "Hey Kitty Kat." He purrs.

He locks the door and slithers towards me, and I am helpless once more. Not even the knife that's tucked in my back pocket can save me. The beast pounces, and I can smell the whiskey on his breath. He breathes in the scent of youth on my skin and groans softly. He whispers in my ear as he sets me down on the bed. He touches my arms, and he smiles at me.

"Did you miss me Kitty?" he asks. When I don't answer, he screams at me. I turn to look out the window and see rain falling. It cries out for me because the river in my eyes has stopped flowing. He pushes me against the bed and holds me down, just as I reach for the knife in my back pocket. I scream aloud, hoping that my mother can hear, that maybe someone will save me.

"Shhh..." he whispers as he touches my lips, and then his hand trails down further. I squirm and kick as he touches me; I get out a muffled scream, and he moves his hand away and smiles evilly. He pulls at his belt, then at the fly of his jeans. I kick him and push him off of me and roll off of the bed. My head hits the bedside table, and I cry out in pain. He pushes me back against the wall; my head spins out of control. I try to keep my eyes open, but it's hard. The beast pulls at my sweatpants, and as I feel myself letting go, I see Nick; he tells me to open my eyes, and when I do, I scream at the sight of the beast. He bruises my arms with his touch; I kick him away from me and spit on him. Finally, I reach into my back pocket and pull the knife out on him; I can hear his heart beating. The music outside

thumps; it gets louder and louder. Tonight I will get revenge on the beast and avenge myself.

"Don't touch me!" I scream, and my head spins. I have no control of my thoughts, no control of my hands, and I can't stop screaming. I can't stop crying out for help. The beast taunts me, laughs in my face, and I see thunder. It breaks into the earth, and my head shakes, my hands shake. I grip the knife; I grip it hard, and the beast slithers towards me and grabs me as I lose control of my world, and the knife. He breaks me and rips me apart as lightning strikes. Someone begins to bang on the door. It's my mother; she can hear my cries.

"Open the door, Katrina!" She's screaming and banging wildly. The beast grunts and presses against me; I close my eyes and feel around for the knife. I accidentally cut my hand on it as I grip it, and I open my eyes. I see the beast breathing heavily as he continues to break me as he has so many times before. He laughs at me as he hovers above me. Mama is banging on the door, and the beast reaches out to kill me with his bare hands. But I do it first. It's all a blur when I drive the knife into his heart. I never thought I could commit such a violent act. But I have, and I'm not sure if this is right or wrong anymore. The beast whispers in my ear, and mutters his last sickening words. He struggles for life.

"Kitty..." he says slowly, and his blood drips onto my skin. I push him off of me and watch as he holds himself. He loses everything he once had. He reaches out for my help, but I just stand there with blood on my hands. The door busts open, and I see an officer. My mother just stands there, watching me. A crowd of bubbly people behind her watch as well, and I push through them. When I get outside, it's still raining. Thunder strikes, and I see Nick waiting at the gate. I lift my hands so he can see my bloody palms.

"Your mom called me."

I nod my head and remember scribbling Nick's number down on the kitchen table. Nick approaches me, and I take a step back. Sirens go off. I am on my knees now, hands up behind my head.

"Katrina, what did you do?"

"I set the butterfly free."

And I smile and fly away.



Out

Carla Mulieri
Color Pencil on Paper

I'm Sorry That You Will Never Meet Your Great Grandfathers

by Marie-Antoinette Thomas

I'm sorry that you will never meet your great grandfathers
or smell the scents of your grandfather's air
or breathe easy amongst blades of tall grass while
holding the left hand of your first love.

I'm sorry that your mother was unprepared
for the day you claimed your kingdom and
your father's eyes never met yours in the shade
that loves to make us blind to our mistakes.

Maybe in the connection of souls
I should have told you, forewarned you
before you went searching for an egg
to make your bed.

So, as I apologize, I absorb regret.

Guiltily looking down at the gentle lines
that form your tiny tender palms

I ask, "Why was I chosen to display
such heavenly power that will only end up
devoured by the pain of inevitable rainy days?"

I'm sorry to say I don't deserve you.

As I behold the traces of my smile and eyes,

I apologize, sympathize, hope to God you recognize
how beautiful you are and how stars are awaiting your grasp,
how it feels to be loved by an opposite and held tight till souls indulge
each other

and at last reinvent yourself to the next generation
through the spirit of your sons and daughters.

I'm sorry that I never got to tell you I loved you
before the first heartbreak and how much I think you will be greater
than the greatest the world has ever seen.

As this scene ends with you in strangers' arms,

I apologize for any potential harm life may bring,

praying that when yours comes, you won't be doing the same thing.



Camille
Emma Matamoros
Clay



The Fun Machine Took a Shit and Died

Whitney Johnston

Black & White Photography

SOMETHING

by Chris Garces

Out at a bar one night,
A couple of people around me at a table.
A fat broad brings us our beers,
She puts down the coasters and sets us up.
I got mine to my mouth when they all raise theirs,
And one says, "Cheers to family and friends!"
Another says, "To my wife Jenny!"
I lift mine to the amassed mugs
And say,
"To whatever the hell it is we got."
They laugh and drink,
And after a second, I do too.
I don't have a family or friends
Or some lanky thing named Jenny waiting for me at home,
But I got this beer
And the money to pay for a few more,
So that's something.

Nothing

by Vit Benton

Nothing is but a stream of endless unrest
A reliable source to bide all your ambitions, hopes, and desires
Nothing is nothing within itself
So it is, I believe in nothing
There is nothing more reliable than nothing
Not a single person, fable, language, or vessel
No heaven or hell
Our God is nothing, he exists by the flow of imagination
Which is nothing
We exist in a realm of a suitable cause
What we have is nothing but an ability to create more than what we see
What we feel
We exist, given the greatest gift of the perfect motivation
The motivation of nothing...
And to make something
Something of ourselves
CREATIVITY, LOVE, AND HAPPINESS
Nothing will set you free
Nothing is what pushes us towards the only things worth living for
Nothing else is more reliable
No other blessing is worth the effort
To avoid being nothing



Misirlou

Whitney Johnston

Black & White Photography

SLEEPING WITH NEW ORLEANS

by Brittany Pryce

I woke up in New Orleans with the bitter taste of Miami lingering on my tongue.
Summer evaded when he crawled in, and winter quickly entered and
fogged up the room.

I was empty and needing a quick fix, got my filling.

His touch was cold and bare just like my North Dakota morning.

And it was rapid, and pointless, and hurt me more in my soul than in my pelvis.

And when he shook it busted just like my St. Louis afternoon.

As I soaked in his sweat I could envision Dallas and Denver,
and they all tasted so grey and sounded like raindrops.

And at that very moment, I knew that somewhere in Savannah I
would have to come to reconciliatio with myself and I.

LOSING MY NOVELTY

BY WHITNEY JOHNSTON

As a child, I can remember lying in bed at night, looking out my bedroom window and searching for the brightest star in the sky. I would then wish upon that star for simple, childish things, such as being a ballerina or a princess. Those wishes never came true to save me from what would be my life. I was, instead, given a chance to become something else. Yet, while this something else has left me somewhat jaded, it has also given me innumerable ways of looking at the world, both objectively and subjectively, both grounded in and dissociated from my past. I have tested the fragility of the human spirit. I have been to the dark side. I have made my way back.

A few years after I was born, my mother decided to leave my addiction-riddled, abusive father. I would see him only a few times over the next eighteen or so years. Once as a child when he kidnapped me. Once in middle school when he slapped me in the face for informing him that he couldn't expect me to see him as a father after all those years he wasn't there. Once when he came to see me in a group home and proceeded to attack me for being hopeful. And, lately, thanks to the influx of social networking sites, I have had the good fortune of him "friending" me, then having random psychotic episodes aimed at me.

After my mother left him, she found another abusive man to fall in love with. I have always assumed she thought because he wasn't an alcoholic or addicted to drugs, it was a step up. For six years we would be tormented by this man. I would learn early that the neighbors just turn up the volume on their TV's when you cry

for help, and some teachers don't do much when you go to school with a black eye in the first grade.

Not long after my mother finally ended our relationship with him, I was sent away to the country to stay with family for a while. By the time I returned I had hit puberty and with the hormones came the depression. In sixth grade I made my first suicide attempt and was sent off to the psych ward. By the third time I had decided that I was going to do it right. With the bottle of Lithium capsules in hand, I took one mouthful after another. I would be told later that I had swallowed somewhere around 90 of them. Unfortunately, like my life, my death wouldn't come so easy. Attempting suicide wasn't my only vice, though. In between my mini-vacations to the psych ward, I had begun to dabble in sex, drugs, and 90's music. At first it was purely recreational. I began to try on different identities. In my classes, I was the gifted and talented student with lots of potential. During lunch I was smoking in the girl's bathroom. On the weekend I was painting the town black with the goths and the gangsters.

Eventually, I developed a comfortable pattern of self-destructive behavior. Although I somehow still managed to pass my classes, I had decided that school was just another place for me to catch up on sleep and defy authority. I had given up on suicide and settled on cutting. I had moved on to heavier drugs and more alcohol. My promiscuity was at its peak. Because of the choices I made, when I ended up being raped by a friend, I blamed myself for a long time. With my

mother blaming me as well, and the trauma of my situation consuming me, I was finding it harder to function properly, which was complicated by the fact that I didn't really function properly to begin with. When my mother was called to come pick me up from the juvenile detention center after I was arrested for truancy, she informed them she would not be coming to get me. Keeping to her not uncommon *modus operandi*, she made up things to dig me deeper into a hole. That being said, I was now a ward of the state. After being shuffled around through two foster homes and a group home, I finally decided to run away.

For three months I lived on the streets of New Orleans and squatted in abandoned houses. I flew under the wings of gutter punks, hippies, and gay strippers. I spent my days "spanging" and my nights drinking whiskey on the Moonwalk. When I was finally picked up by the police during a night of drunken antics, there came with it the impending sense of doom. Within a month I was sent to a prison-style facility for juveniles, where I was surrounded by pre-teen jailhouse turnouts and plagued by sadistic correctional officers. In keeping with my method of operation, I fed into the chaos, only settling down after a bad fight and some time in solitary.

Not surprising, my six months in "juvy" did not do much to reform me. I learned that if you want junk food, you go to the church services, if you want people to be nice to you, you make friends with the six-foot-tall girl, and if you want awful memories of hairy, naked girls, you take a shower. However, having not really resolved anything, except that I never wanted to go to jail again, I continued on the path of least resistance. Within three months I was sitting in an abortion clinic. One and a half months later, I turned

"I had begun to dabble in sex, drugs, and 90's music."

seventeen. Over the next year, I dropped all of my friends, got my GED, started working, moved around a bit, then finally got my own apartment and started the lovely journey into adulthood. Obviously, it hasn't been all sunshine, lollipops, and rainbows since then. I have lost the roof to my apartment and most of my belongings in a hurricane. I have been left injured and unconscious on the side of the road in the middle of the night after a hit-and-run. Life doesn't magically become easier, and I have accepted the reality that my life will never be simple. Thus, I decided long ago to embrace my jaded perspectives and seemingly paradoxical nature, using the knowledge gained from my experiences in an attempt to understand humanity.

My cousin said to me once, "I wish I had your life. You have been through so much and learned so much from it." My reply to her was, "Well, I wish I had yours. I always wanted to be a ballerina."



Dream
Javier Chavarro
Solar Plate

Humanity's Carousel

By Oliver Bulfango

Societies falling prey to cyclical insanity,
This is the state of our doomed humanity,
Merry go round till madness enslaves,
Losing all hopes through nature depraved.
Closing our eyes we leap without knowing,
Feeling the fear molded through growing,
Merry go round till insanity entrances,
Passing by infinite chances.
A chance to fix what our history has started,
A chance to realize a truth departed,
Merry go round a harsh reality,
Anthropological truth taunts me.
A state of a world being led by materials,
Where duality meets math through abstract binomials,
Merry go round a society of the blind,
Losing themselves until it's them they find.
Creating a way to establish a means,
To clear a path to see what is seen,
Merry go round a ratio called pi,
Straight through the circle where truth lies.
Breathing this breath of conscious decisions,
I sit and watch this carousel's mission,
Merry go round a world of confusion,
With me standing alone as society's intrusion.
And it goes round...
and round...
and round...



Ava

Heather Camargo
Digital Photography

P'an Ku
Literary & Arts Magazine of Broward College
Volume 46 Issue 1 Fall Edition 2009



P'an Ku

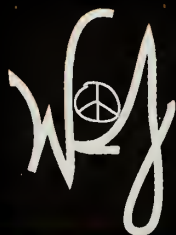
P'an Ku

Literary & Arts Magazine of Broward College
Volume 46, Issue 2 Spring Edition 2010

Editor's Note:

The past year called for a note. However, I will not be attesting to my or this issue's greatness or that of my two editors that helped put it together. Instead, I want to take the opportunity to thank a few people that helped make both the fall and spring issues possible: **Vincent Sica** in the Print Department for going above and beyond in helping to straighten out the problems with the fall issue. **Andrew Dutka** in Archives for his help in tracking down old photos of the college. **Patricia Meyer and Harumi Abe** in the Central Campus Arts Department for their help in getting student submissions. My Observian counterpart, **Liz Fleming**, for holding the house lamp, cropping the art and being my second set of eyes. **Melissa Correa** for being my third set of eyes and for that one excellent paint splatter; sorry it couldn't be red.

Peace out, Broward College.

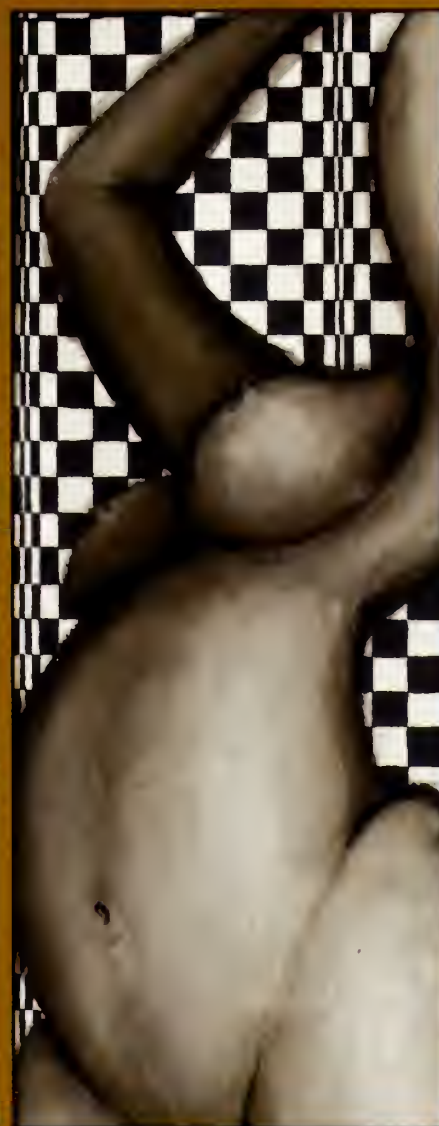


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Counter by Jason Schoonover
Mixed Media -
Ink Wash, Marker, Charcoal

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1968



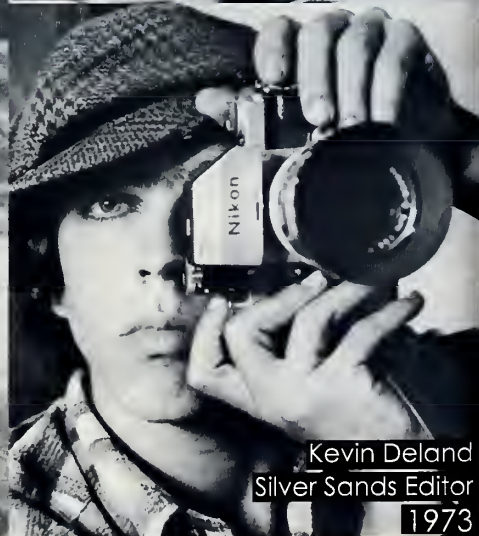
1968



Summer Jam, Watkins Glen, NY
Photo by Kevin Deland
1973



Janis Mara
P'an Ku Editor
1972



Kevin Deland
Silver Sands Editor
1973

'This is George. He likes girls' bodies.'

In 1960, the Junior College of Broward County opened its doors to 28 faculty members and 701 students. Fifty years and three name changes later, Broward College celebrates this milestone anniversary in 2010.



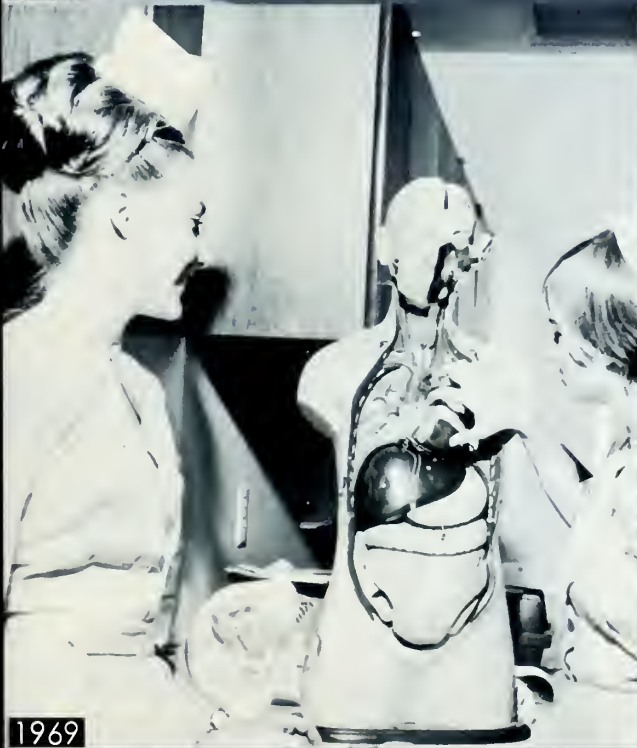
1961



Elections
Student Government
1961



1968



1969



1971



Tom Debor
Features Editor & Columnist
Paladin Newspaper
1969

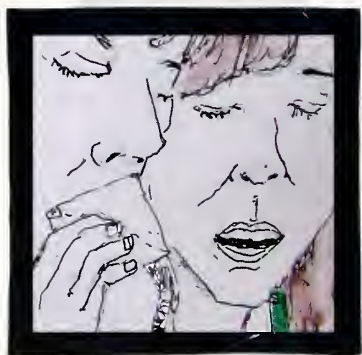
Throughout the '60s and '70s, Silver Sands was published each semester as an archive of the college's history. The photos on these pages are taken from this publication.

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Lies & Truths

By Whitney Johnston

She is transported
from the age of
free love
with two shopping
bags on each arm.
Her hair is fake;
her heart is real.
I blow smoke in the mirror.



Scott's Parking Spot By Liz Fleming
(Black & White Photography)



Everyday Jazz
By Edgarn Abreu
(Acrylic)

Alley Fog

By A.J. Leigh

You probably could have drummed a beat
to the vibration of the wind,
but the alley fog was thick enough
that our hands disappeared,
suspicious beneath the
swollen moon.

Street lamps flickered horror film style
as you staggered below them,
eyes lit in the frenzy of beach sand
and warm beer.
The sheen of sweat,
it called to me from the corners of your mouth
as we stumbled over sewer wells,
(sweltering pavement)
and I wondered, What happened to my shoes?

3:30 am... it had been a while since we'd met.
But I wouldn't miss the cotton cracking in your throat,
raw like stifled grief,
or the twitching of your rabbit nose,
senses dulled from the stale street vapor,
the city's breath.

Photo Contest Winner



Antiquites By Juan Sebastian Maldonado
(Digital Photography)

Beauty

By Hanadi Azaiza

Beauty is a monstrous attribute.
It reels you in its deepest sorrows.
It engulfs you in distress.
As alluring as it can be,
it is as well the devil's tool.
Too dangerous to get caught up in,
yet its necessity we desire.



Aftermath By Ian Roland
(Silver Gelatin)



Queen of the Savages By Whitney Johnston
(Silver Gelatin)

Beautiful You Are By Cherly Servalis

They told me that my beautiful isn't beautiful enough— stripped me of my identity
Told me that I was ugly, that this face isn't worthy of the front pages of magazines
Beg me to be a part of a brainwashed society
Letting the smoky mirrors of show business taint personal belief
Laughing— because I couldn't fit the [right] pair of jeans
Stating simply— obese
Words quicker than sand— sink deep
When will this caged bird go free?
Shepherd to His sheep
[Flawlessly flawed] made perfectly, how dare you not seel
Saying "well um, you have a great personality"
Shaking my head to all who have conformed to this world's view of beauty

The Starvation of Isis

By Angela Nicoletti

Annalina once mentioned the ancient Egyptians believed that to pronounce the names of the dead was to make them live again. As if they ambled through the underworld waiting for Isis, goddess of motherhood, to collect shards of their lives embedded deep in the flesh of the earth and string them back together, like adding pearls to a necklace. If this was a critical message from Annalina to be decoded at a later time, Charles was never certain. She often left pieces of herself behind; giving herself away was her specialty. Like Louis Braille, she invented a language all her own, to communicate in a series of raised dots and patterns, each symbol a remnant of herself for someone else.

To siphon ghosts by lighting candles and chanting was never something Charles could bring himself to do. His last resort, and the only medium he could ever pin her down to, like a blue iridescent butterfly, was canvas. Projecting her image brought Annalina to life again. It was a signal from the living to the dead, like a glint of a mirror, to release her as if she were a material possession or something of Charles' that he had lost along the way. So he slaved over every detail of her appearance, each one an indelible mark engraved on his brain tissue- wide turquoise eyes outlined in a ring of black like a cats, an unhappy mouth the color of smashed raspberries, and long waves of scarlet hair that tumbled down her shoulders with tremendous fury. In every painting, Annalina is draped in black, dressed prepared for her own funeral, but also full and illuminated, like someone is superimposed over her, blurring the edges, a latent image with bulging, heavy flesh, exploding outward, the way that she saw herself.

Charles often unfolds the only possession of Annalina's he has, a yellowing, tattered letter announcing the death of her husband, Steven. Four days before he left for war in the summer of 1942, she cursed his B-17 to go up and never come down. The plane did go up, but it also fell to the hands of gravity, spiraling into the black ocean like the planes in grainy newsreel footage from the theater, the white star

painted on the body fading away in the midday sky.

Shortly after leaving the letter hidden in the breast pocket of one of Charles' coats, Annalina vanished from her own life for good, from the delicate tightrope she pirouetted upon with grace, like a porcelain music box ballerina with a miniature brittle pink skirt and sparkling tiara, a relic from her childhood resembling a dream shattered, her disproportioned adolescent body, round, fat and dimpled, the obvious blemish to blame. On one side of the line, she was a subservient wife with a bottle of brandy hidden in the back of the cupboard, and on the other, she was a mistress with wide brimmed hats to conceal her appearance as she played the role in an affair with Charles.

The last afternoon they saw one another, the tightrope snapped, the tension was released, and the space between the front door of her white wash house to Charles' red brick middle income apartment, a cavernous dimly lit space, was opened. Warm peach-colored sunlight streaked through the high, grimy windows of his bedroom and onto their figures. Charles could see that Annalina's eyes no longer glinted like emeralds but were vacant lagoons. He could barely make out her features at all; her skin was washed out and yellowed, her bones prickled through her skin like pine needles, and she seemed erased like a sliver of worn soap. The golden, vibrant atmosphere that had once encompassed her, like the halos around saints in medieval paintings, had been darkened. Her voice as she spoke was the only thing that lingered, the same rich, deep, and tantalizing voice always clinging to the edge of disaster or ruin.

"You'll leave one day, you know? Just like him," said Annalina.

"You always say that, just like you say it's the end of the world everyday for someone." Charles exhaled, smoothing his honey-blond hair back with one hand and unbuttoning his faded, navy blue collared shirt with the other. Whenever she began to talk like this, in her fits of hysteria, he blotted her out like ink on paper; he could not take her seriously. Like the pull of the moon to the tide, he knew the mood

would recede sooner or later.

In a soothing manner, Charles collided against her and pulled her downward, their bodies collapsing onto the bed like two failed parachutists with nothing but bed sheets. Like meditation, the palms of his hands moved back and forth, from knee to thigh, thigh to hip, hip to knee, in one continuous robotic cycle. The weight of his single hand seemed to crush the bones in Annalina's body. The less she ate, the more she shrank, like Alice going down the rabbit hole, the barrier between her skin and bones nonexistent, nothing to hold her together. However, the more she drank, the more she forgot how small she was really getting, how easily her bones could be crushed away.

The caressing did not excite her at all; it irritated her like a cat's kneading paws against exposed, pinkish-pale flesh. Desire was dead and all that existed was the required duty that morphed into punishment, obligatory once you abandoned yourself in the rapture of sin. Annalina was trapped by her crime, her cheating.

"I am pregnant." Annalina sighed with resignation, the words exploding outward like accidental gunfire, forming without effort.

Charles' hand stopped and was withdrawn in one swift movement, as if Annalina's body had transformed into something hideous and deformed, covered in scales or sagging flesh, part of a freak show.

"What?" Charles said; his voice shocked, offended.

"Never mind," Annalina whispered, turning over and forming a gap between their two bodies. The space filled with Annalina's husband, his pilot uniform stained in places with blood and ash. The mattress sagged and the springs creaked at the added weight.

"We will talk about it tomorrow, okay?"

...

Charles often looks back, knowing he should have clasped his arms around her like a solitary anchor, vowing never to let her go. However, time overlaps, unfolds, and encompasses every moment leading up to catastrophe, all the days, weeks, and months. It is impossible to pinpoint an exact place on a map to cut free and examine. It can, though, like thin ice be seen through to the very bottom, to the past, which remains sealed and unalterable. Mistakes are only visible when

looking down at the murky bottom.

Unlike her life, which was planned with care, calculated in its every detail, Annalina's death was careless, a waving of a white flag. Although Charles always predicted her death, he imagined it differently. One night he dreamt that she fell into her backyard swimming pool dressed in her velvet blue party dress, the same dress she wore to her husband's extravagant parties, where all of the guests would tell her it looked like she was wearing the Atlantic Ocean around her tiny frame. In the illuminated emerald chlorine water, she floated face down, hair electrified outward like a mermaids and her hands as white as skeletons. She floated on top of the surface, light and effortless, like

a single glass bottle, fragile, glassy eyed, and something ethereal that had been broken along the way, but she didn't die in a swimming pool. Her death wasn't as romantic as that; her body didn't splash into the water like a B-17 hitting the ocean.

Instead, she was rushed to the hospital after she stopped breathing in the middle of a department store. In a hospital bed with bleach white sheets, vitamins were pumped into her veins, as if

damage from starvation can be reversed like winding a clock backward. Adding weight to a body isn't as simple as dropping stones into a well, down the throat into the belly. Her heart just didn't remember how it was supposed to carry around a full-formed body, let alone a child, and instead, it exploded like a firework on the Fourth of July.

To save Annalina by folding time or rewinding the tape backward was not something Charles could do or would ever be able to do. Her grandmother tried to save her once, tried to get her help, told her that you couldn't outrun your problems. Annalina never believed that they would hunt her down and kick her around as punishment, though. To have saved her was as impossible as awakening a ghost, a stubborn, willful ghost. She was letters written in the sand and smoothed over by the tide. She was a yellowed page in a book torn out. She was under ice.

Annalina only ever lived on through paintings,

*"Desire was dead
and all that existed was
the required duty that
morphed into punishment,
obligatory once you
abandoned yourself in the
rapture of sin."*

CONTINUED

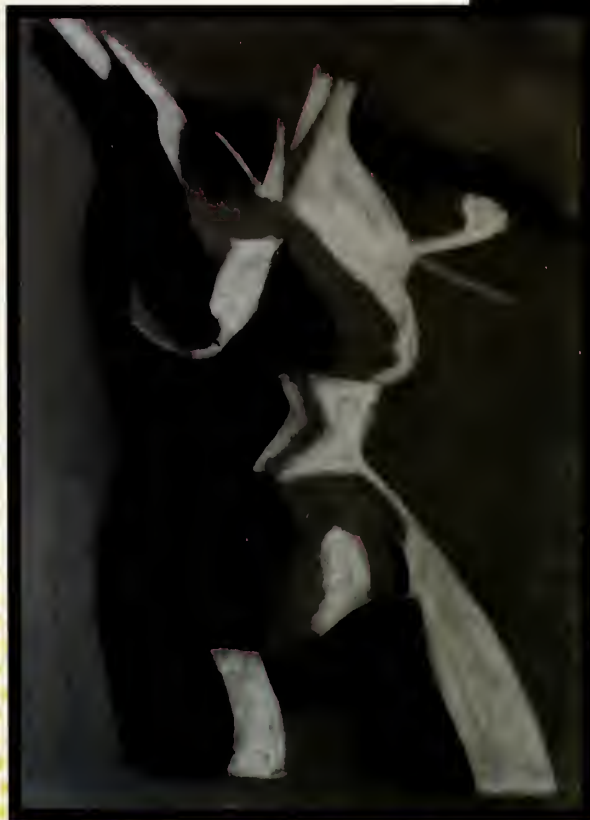
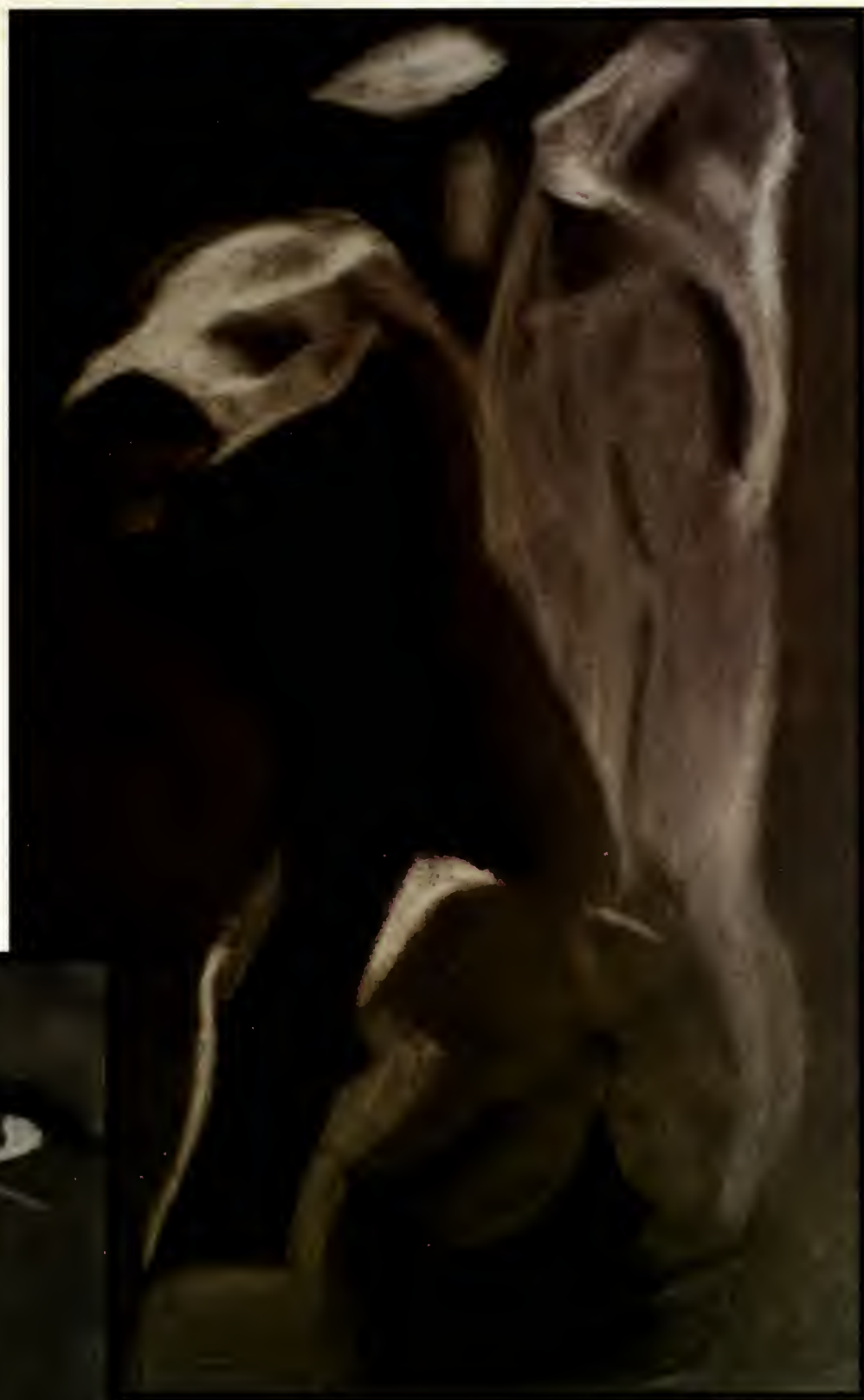
where she always perched on the peaks of different monuments, full and lively, buzzing with energy. In Charles' last painting, he fashioned her upon the pinnacle of a gold Egyptian pyramid, a headdress shaped like a throne adorning her fiery hair and a cloak of orange embroidery over her shoulders, entitled "Isis."

The way Isis collected the body parts of her

lover from various crevices around the living earth, Charles did the same, piecing Annalina together through meticulous brushstrokes, piecing together her double lives, light and heavy, precarious and safe, in hope that she would return with their unborn child inside of her- its translucent skin, a window, revealing a bright, ruby red heart pumping away into all the surrounding darkness, a sign of vitality and strength.



I Dare You to Love Me By Madeline Marshall
(Soft Pastels)



Untitled 1 & 2 By Liz Fleming
(Charcoal)

Day 2

By Natalie R Silva

Day two of so many that flew

Right on by me with the blink of an eye.

All shot down, drank away, smoked into the air, poof- gone, gone, gone.

My nose running, my heart hurting, wishing I had a cigarette to smoke,

When I don't even.

Wanting to pour out the concrete from my heart, from my depths of my infidelity and stubborn ways of loving. It all hurts too much.

Day two. Today I promise to change, to be the better person. Situations arise and I am back at day one. I cannot, how can I not? My heart stiff and cold, won't budge. My eyes feel the pain with the blinding tears that drain.

I wish I weren't-

Weak.

Or so strong.

Hard and a rock place. Sometimes where one should be but would rather not be once there.

Catch

It's a 22 and I am no longer.

Almost at a four, the long road ahead feels short compared to the one behind I keep on staring at.

Dusty eyes, chapped lips, the air dry and my mouth thirsty for the right words to say aloud to the circumference that matters.

What tragedy it is, I have it all-

Yet can't use any.

I love you.

Day 2.



Priss By Cassandra Anda
(Ink)



Ode to Marty
By Diane Karmiol
(Clay & Glass Eyes)

Thoughts in My Head

By Brittany Pryce

I am slowly drifting away from myself; I need help finding me.

My brain is breathing and my lungs are thinking.

I need to gain composure or, rather yet, gain a sense of feeling worthwhile.

My nose keeps on seeing this big, black blur, and my eyes keep on smelling this thick, powerful stench.

I'm pretty sure my mouth is open, but I cannot hear myself screaming.

I have escaped myself and need help relocating.

My heart is sweating, and my palms are beating.

Everything has become so dark, and I cannot feel my self-being.

I have to abominate these thoughts in my head, before they drive me insane.

Hands

By Abbigail Perkins

Sweaty, sweaty palms,
take me by surprise,
grab me at my tiny hips
and tuck me to your side.
Heavy, heavy mouth,
brushes its lips on mine,
a Vaseline biting tongue
along my chin and spine.
Quickly, quickly roam,
rip off my tender leaves,
tear apart the entrance to
an untold destiny.

Crushing, crushing weight,
you murder air supply,
fold my eyes so I am blind,
and hang me out to dry.
Ripping, ripping snake,
a dog's decaying paw,
twenty thrusts of jagged knife,
a slap to my rancid jaw.
Stinking, stinking death,
your vessel called to keep,
consumed by sweaty, heavy, quickly,
crushing, ripping, stinking palms
that claimed the life of me.

These Feet Are Made For Walking
By Angel Rodriguez
(Stoneware & Wire)





Tat O By Edgaryn Abreu
(Acrylic)

I am Legend

By Christopher Paul Mondesir

I am a symbol
 A symbol of hope in the face of evil
 I am the fear of the people
 Fear turned to gold, for the young and the old
 I am the cry of an entire nation
 Infected by a warrior's determination
 I am an idea on a mission
 To corrupt the ones that lack inspiration
 I am a dream turned to reality
 Because I decided to choose my destiny
 I am a force of nature
 Nobody will control my future
 I am a reaction to an unjust action
 Vengeance fuels my determination
 I am a glitch in the system
 The cancer killing the villain
 I am God's son
 I will shine the light of the sun:
 Piece by piece, to bring peace, from west to east
 I will transform those ideas, into operas
 Screaming freedom, just like an anthem
 No! Shall I scream, to the killing of my dream
 No! To assimilation to the system
 No! To surrendering to intimidation
 You will not stop me on my mission
 Because... I AM LEGEND!



Usine d'Imagination
 By Paul Louise-Julie
 (Cardboard)



Brush By Vanessa Kwan
(Ink)

Broken

By Vincent Phan Tran

Raja Aashish's hands dropped to his two daggers as he entered the storage room. Their rough hilts dug against his palms as he half-drew them from holsters. His eyes calculated the blind spots on either side of the door, ears straining for shifting feet announcing an attack.

He kept the storage room filthy and cold. A hiding intruder would streak the dirt, pinpointing their location. The room's unpleasant cold would cause breath to condense into white trails, the movement alerting his dark eyes against an attack.

Satisfied he was in no danger, Aashish relaxed and shifted inside. He ignored the disparaging stares from the two armed men tasked with guarding the room. He had learned ago to tend after his own safety.

He was grateful for the weak light pooling in from slits near the ceiling as he maneuvered past boxes and dirty bags littering the floor. He stopped to stare at the girl. She was looking out from her small cage on top an old table, her fingers wrapped through the screen door. He used the cage to carry dogs onto airplanes during his infrequent trips. The metal sides were sturdy against anyone lacking a man's strength.

The girl's Asian eyes were large as she stared out between her hands. Her knuckles were white as she gripped the wire mesh of the screen. Fear made her breath quick and shallow. He found himself thinking how lucky she was.

Around the same age, his father's grating yells had combined with callused fists. He was quick to strike and unforgiving of a child's mistakes. His mother had watched on fearfully, helpless against Kasa Jain's unpredictable temper. The beatings grew strong enough to leave him bruised and limping. Hard slaps left humiliating white trails like exclamation points on his face, stark reminders to all of his failings.

He was 15 when someone first tried to kill him. Penetrating the mansion's security and entering his room like some avenging demon, the assassin's black clothing and mask made him nearly invisible against the night. Only the presence of a night maid saved his life. When he woke to shuffling feet and gleaming steel, he had shoved her in front of the plunging blade and ran screaming from the room. His father's men rushed in moments later, guns cannoning as the assassin dropped.

His father ordered the intruder's body left where it fell and then told Aashish to continue sleeping in the room. It was an abject lesson to the ever present need for caution. For two nights Aashish stared at the body from a corner, shaking in terror and smelling its slow rot. The killing attempts continued counterpart to his father's beatings for offenses real and imagined.

He angered at the memory and his hands slid slowly back to the daggers at his waist. The weapons were heavy and formed of pure titanium. One was ramrod straight, the other curved like a half-moon. He had received them from his mother, her way of comforting an abused and lonely boy. He used them to kill for the first time when he was 16.

He had stalked a cat, coaxing it away from its home. He kept it calm by stroking its head while flattering it in a soothing voice. It stayed docile and purred contentedly up until the moment the straight dagger entered its belly. Then it yowled and clawed as it frantically dug its teeth into his arm. Its legs desperately kicked and struggled.

Aashish pinned it down by the neck with his forearm while his heart thundered with excitement. He marveled as the knife cleanly split the soft belly. Its razor sharp edge peeled back the skin like wet paper. The cat's piercing screams filled his ears as the knife dug into its guts, ripping down towards its small spine and then up to its lungs, popping ribs as he forced it across, finally, to the heart.

After he threw the animal's body into an alley and washed the blood off his face and hands, he realized with wonder that he had not been afraid. When he was killing, he was God, and God feared nothing.

When he had returned home, his mother stared at him. She looked at his shirt. His torn sleeves showed off red and bleeding scratches along his forearms. He smiled at her. She paused, looking at the knives, and then smiled back. Her dark eyes glowed with understanding. The knives became his constant companions. The hilts wearing thin, replaced, and then re-worn through constant practice.

When he turned 18, he was told to start earning for his family. He began contracting his services out for odd jobs, honing his skills with the knife. Now 20, he was in his prime, and no one was his equal with a blade. This latest assignment was given to him by his father. It was meant to humiliate him. A simple kidnap and ransom, it was far beneath his considerable skills. He looked back at the girl.

She had tensed when she saw him reach for

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the knives. Her fingers bled as the wire from the screen door bit into her flesh. He was reminded of that first kill so many years ago and the way he made the animal purr. He put a hand on top of the cage and peered down into the child's eyes. Speaking in a calm voice, he said, "Joanna, you'll hurt yourself doing that. Please stop."

"You didn't know what my grandma was saying because she wasn't talking English. You scared her, so she stopped speaking normal. She was telling you she would give you money. We have a lot of it now. We didn't before, but now we have a lot. She just wanted you to leave me alone," Joanna pleaded.

"I was scared, too, Joanna," Aashish replied. "I was scared your grandmother would change her mind. That's why you're here now." Aashish smiled at her. "Your voice sounds like a bell, did you know that? Like one of those small bells someone rings to let me know dinner's ready."

He looked at her with a kind face, like an uncle favoring a niece. "We're going to be friends for a bit longer, Joanna. Only a bit longer, though." He brought his face close to the screen and smiled again. "Why don't you want to be my friend?"

"Because Grandma keeps the monsters away, and you're a monster."

She shrieked as Aashish's hand flashed down, his face murderous as he popped the straight dagger from its holster. With a speed that defied her eyes, he spun and released in a smooth, practiced motion. His other hand dropped simultaneously to the second blade, drawing it in a streak of light. His body crouched in a fighting stance as his eyes darted left and right.

The thrown dagger quivered, embedded halfway to the hilt in the wall. A rat's body twitched as its severed head rolled. Aashish had reacted to the soft noise of its scurrying, his hands moving without thought. Aashish turned back to Joanna, and his eyes flashed as she shrunk to the back of the cage. When he spoke, his voice was calm again yet cold.

"Do you like cats, Joanna?"

She hugged her knees and began to cry.

Jebediah Creek registered one thought as a fist slammed into his nose and a raised knee shoved blood out his mouth.

This is the nicest bar I've ever gotten beat up in.

He rolled forward and narrowly avoided a second fist hammering towards his head. Scrambling up, he flexed his knees and shifted his weight to his toes. He squinted as lights synched to pounding rock music

swiveled down on his face. Two men announced as SECURITY by their t-shirts surrounded him. A third was on the ground clutching at a broken knee.

He was acutely aware of the crowd of perfumed party-goers in the wider circle. Cocktail dresses, evening suits, and arrogance were the rule at Le Palais. The club prided itself on presentation over all else. Jebediah's plain white linen shirt over dark jeans stood out starkly.

The original plan had been simple. Get in through a staff entrance, isolate the target, satisfy the bounty, and then get the hell out. Straight forward enough until a cocktail waitress dumped a tray of drinks on him. His hand had accidentally grazed her ass. She'd jumped and screeched, blaming him for the wasted drink order and demanding payment.

She'd started screaming for security when he tried to push by her. Three overtly menacing men ran towards him, following the girl's accusing finger. Jebediah cursed as he watched his target go towards the front door. Pierre L'Gardin owed money to a particularly vicious ex-wife, one willing to put a decent price on collection. Jebediah just had to bring him back to the bounty broker.

Jebediah was shoving hard through the crowd towards his fleeing target when a beefy hand gripped his arm like a vise. Without turning, he chambered his right knee up to his chest and kicked back. He made contact with a leg, felt it snap, and the hand released him as a man's voice screamed in pain. The crowd parted for the two remaining bouncers.

A bald-headed weight lifter moved to his left while a leaner dark-haired man shifted to his right. Jebediah noticed their t-shirts were so tight you could see their nipples.

"My god, it's like you both shop at Baby Gap," he remarked, and then quickly stepped forward, intent on ending this fast. His motion abruptly stopped as a metal tray exploded against the back of his head, bringing him to his knees. He peered painfully up at the smirking cocktail waitress. She winked around an impressive bust, shrugged a "Sorry."

The two bouncers moved in as she danced away. Jebediah caught a right cross from Baldie while Dark Hair kicked up with his knee. Having him on the ground meant they could hover and beat him at their leisure. He tucked a shoulder and rolled forward past their next blows. Blinking the dizziness away he shoved himself up.

Baldie roared and rushed him. Jebediah pivoted while moving forward and to the side, narrowly avoiding outstretched arms. He dropped an elbow straight down, and it connected with the back

of Baldie's neck, bringing him to a knee. Jebediah slid back half a step, brought his knee up, and then skipped forward while extending his leg. His foot slammed into Baldie's jaw and, the man pitched over unconscious.

Without pause, Jebediah spun right, whipping his head around first to spot his target. The back of his fist followed and caught Dark Hair in an eye. With a shocked cry Dark Hair threw two clumsy fists. Jebediah brought both his arms up and out and wiped the flailing blows aside. With a loud yell he slammed his open arms together in a smacking motion. His hands collided against Dark Hair's ears, and the man screamed. He followed with an upper cut to his abdomen and then reared back and threw his forehead directly into the bouncer's face. Dark Hair stared numbly for a moment and then fell.

Jebediah ran for the front, and the crowd parted along waves of Armani. He shoved the door open and cursed, staring at an empty street. Ten years ago, even five, he would have been fast enough to catch Pierre, regardless of a few club bouncers. He'd been careless about his surroundings and relegated the waitress as harmless.

His cell phone rang, and he grabbed it, barking into the handset.

"He's gone Flint," Jebediah cursed.

"Too bad. That would've been a good pay off," Flint remarked calmly. "Get cleaned up and come to the office."

"Why?" asked Jebediah, wiping blood from his mouth, frustrated, and shaking vodka from his shirt.

"I have another job, an important one. Get over here, and I'll explain," said Flint. Jebediah slapped the phone together with another curse, shoved it in his pocket, and stomped off to his car.

Arriving at his apartment a few minutes later, he stared at the note taped to his door. Red letters against a black background spelled out EVICTION WARNING. Tearing it off, he pushed the door open.

The room's overhead lights flickered on, highlighting bare white walls. The studio apartment was sparse: a single bed, a dark couch in front of an old TV, and a small kitchenette. The room spoke of simple use, a place to sleep and eat.

Jebediah considered the crumpled note in his hand. Bringing full money on Pierre would have

made him current on rent and helped satisfy the power company. He threw the paper away and stripped off his soiled clothes.

He had a fighter's lean and hard body, built for speed and sudden movement. It was unpleasant to look at. A large bruise on his abdomen had started to form and was joined by an older scar across the width of his body, a souvenir from a knife in a small Brazilian town. He winced as the knotted scab on his shoulder pulled, a reminder of a 9mm's entry and exit.

He paused at the bathroom mirror. Scrubbing a hand through graying hair, he gingerly touched the growing lump at the back of his head. The crow's-feet surrounding his blue eyes echoed time's leaching of strength.

He switched the shower on and allowed himself the briefest moment of rest. He stood with his eyes closed against the pounding water. It flowed against his face, hot enough to make him wince. He used the pain to center himself.

When he opened his eyes, he stared through the glass door of the shower at a picture suspended on the wall outside protected by a plastic frame. Wiping steam and water off the glass he looked at a woman's brown eyes and tanned skin. She stared back at him

through the glass, her smile like sun-warmed sand. Chairs propped on a foreign beach in another world supported her under the shade of a tree with huge leaves. He breathed deep the steam from the shower. When he spoke, his voice was low and echoed through the bathroom.

"Just wait a while longer. I'll be there soon."

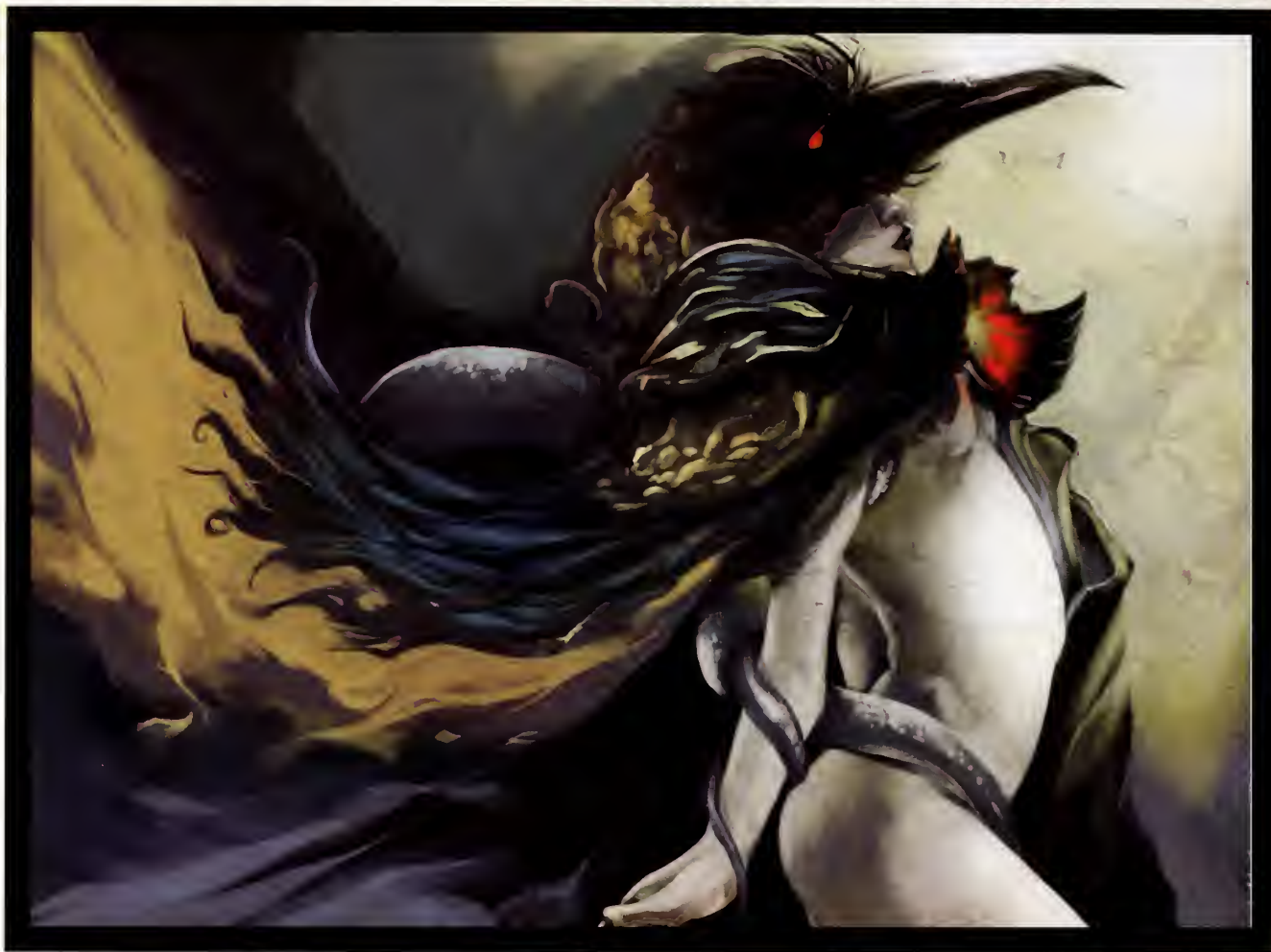
He dried off and dressed quickly, slamming the door as he strode out. Behind him the apartment sat quiet, save for the sound of steam dripping off the woman's face.

A door chime announced Jebediah as he arrived in Flint's small office. It wasn't much larger than his apartment, but the bay windows and abstract art flowing across the walls made it seem bigger.

Flint the Floater was THE bounty broker in town. He signed the best contractors, and his bounties were the biggest, probably because they were for the most fouled up creatures and monstrous things in the world. Silas Robert, The Leather Man; The Psychic

"HE SIGNED THE BEST CONTRACTORS, AND HIS BOUNTIES WERE THE BIGGEST, PROBABLY BECAUSE THEY WERE FOR THE MOST FOULED UP CREATURES AND MONSTROUS THINGS IN THE WORLD."

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Dark Metamorphos By Chun Lo
(Digital Art)

Rapist Terry Sallow- both bounties successfully brokered by Flint.

Flint looked over from the single desk, jumped up, and clapped his hands like a cheerleader. A metallic purple shirt fluttered over blousy white pants. Open sandals showed off matching purple toes.

"Jebediah, you got here fast!" Flint exclaimed. "I do love speed you know." He threw a conspiratorial wink and drifted over.

You would think being gayer than a schoolgirl in ribbons would be an issue for a guy in Flint's line of work. Some Ultimate Fighting wanna-be named Tiger Johnny tried mouthing off when Flint first opened shop. Last Jebediah heard Tiger Johnny was having a hard time flashing his fancy martial arts poses, or pissing like a man, from the confines of his wheelchair. Plus, Flint always paid. You did the job, and you got a check. This meant more to the hard cases he contracted than what he did on his own time.

Jebediah kept this in mind as Flint looped an arm through his, sashaying them back to the desk. Jebediah hitched at his belt, checking his testicles.

Flint shifted hand moisturizer aside to grab a plain manila folder smelling faintly of lavender. Jebediah accepted it and extricated himself from Flint's arm. Flipping it open he saw Raja Aashish glowering up from a grainy photo next to the black and gold stamp verifying legal bounty. It contained a sanction authorization, offering half money if he was alive and full if dead. He stopped, noticing something odd. Flint's name was listed as the issuer, not just the broker.

"You're funding this bounty?" Jebediah asked.

Flint stared for a minute as if unsure how to answer. Instead of speaking, he sat down, all humor lost. He pulled a color picture from his desk. It showed 11-year-old Joanna Nguyen. She sat on Flint's lap as her tiny fingers reached up and back, fastened to his ear lobes. Her nose creased as she giggled to the camera. An elderly woman sat in the background, smiling in that gentle, proud way of grandmothers. Flint pointed to the older woman.

"Everyone calls her Mei." He pronounced it like the spring month. "I think it means grandmother

in Vietnamese. She used to bring Joanna to the nail salon I use. The parents are gone, killed during the war. Mei and Joanna went through communist and refugee camps before they got here. She worked in a chicken processing plant, stripping feathers off carcasses 12 hours a day." Flint paused and smiled.

"She won the lottery, Jebediah. Mei actually won the lottery. She threw a chicken at that ridiculous manager of hers and walked out. It meant a new house, private schools for Joanna..." Flint trailed off as he put fingers on the picture. They left smudge marks across Joanna's face.

"Joanna and Mei were playing dress up when Aashish took her. There were these dolls that Mei had knit from scavenged linen. They were playing dress up with the dolls and talking about where they were going to live, and Aashish came in with his father's men.

"An old woman and a little girl in a cramped apartment, and Aashish broke down the door with a group of men waving fucking guns." Jebediah stared at Flint, realizing he had never seen him angry before. It disturbed him more than he cared to admit.

"He knew Mei wouldn't pay him. She was a tough old bird that lived through things that might break either of us. So he took her granddaughter." Flint pointed to the manila envelope. "We know where she is. It's all in there."

His eyes were piercing as he stared at Jebediah. "You find that son of a bitch... You get Joanna back, and you bring Aashish in." Jebediah stared at Flint with his eyebrows raised. Flint looked back defiantly, as if daring a comment.

"Children should be left alone when they play with dolls," Flint said. He reached in a drawer and pulled out a small metal cylinder. He handed it to Jebediah. Jebediah read the lettering on it silently as he considered Flint.

"Just how good is Aashish?" asked Jebediah.

"Pretty damn good. I've used him when you couldn't get the job done."

A knock brought Aashish from the cage back to the outer room. The windows were covered with cheap aluminum shades, and the fake office stood empty. The buildings true purpose was in the cage behind him. Aashish stopped next to his guards to stare at the groaning man on the ground.

The man had obviously been in a fight. His gray shirt was torn at the shoulder, and his jeans were littered with dark spots from a bloodied nose. A battered shoe hung precariously off one foot, threatening to fall off entirely.

The taller guard, Savu, turned to Aashish. "The

outer guards reported a disturbance before we lost communication. We found them both beaten into unconsciousness. This man was next to them and already injured. Arvind and I subdued him."

Savu moved behind the injured man as Arvind shifted to his side. Savu's dark hand reached out and yanked on the man's hair, pulling his face up to stare at Aashish. Aashish looked down, recognizing the man and shaking his head with a rueful smile.

"Good evening, Jebediah. I'm guessing Flint sent you?"

Jebediah was shaking, beat up, and surrounded by the kind of men mother's scare their kids with. He still smiled though. Aashish's accent reminded him of the convenience store guy from *The Simpsons*.

The smile must have caught Aashish by surprise. He leaned in with an odd look and in his sing-song accent asked, "Is there something on your mind?"

"Yeah." Jebediah spit blood and what might have been a tooth on the floor. "Can you say, 'Thank you, come again?'"

Aashish's right cross slammed Jebediah's head sideways. Light exploded behind his clenched eyes, and he got that floating feeling that comes when your brain collides against the inside of your skull.

"You were too old for this game years ago," Aashish hissed, reaching for his curved knife. "Even at your best you couldn't beat me. I'm faster than you ever were, stronger than you by miles."

Jebediah dragged a painful breath. His shoe, fighting to stay fixed, gave up the battle and fell off as he went groaning to one knee. Jebediah shook his head, a picture of misery. "I couldn't stop you..."

"This is pathetic," Aashish replied. "Kill him." "...from outside the building," Jebediah finished.

The cylinder inside his shoe exploded with a deafening boom. The force of the blast carried Jebediah into Arvind while hurling the others away. Jebediah crashed to a halt on top of Arvind. The guard's hand grabbed desperately for the gun at his waist. With a snarl, Jebediah reared up, and his hand flashed down, palm heel out and fingers curled. It slammed into Arvind's throat with a sickening crunch, destroying the larynx. Arvind's eyes went wide with agony, and his hands scrabbled at his throat. The guard kicked and flopped, strangling to death.

Grabbing the gun from the dying man's holster, Jebediah came up in a crouch. Brandishing the 9mm Glock he turned and...

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...DOWN DAMMIT! GET LOW!

Jebediah threw himself forward as Savu leveled his firearm. The heavy caliber gun sounded like a cannon in the small office. Bullets punched softball-sized holes into the wall above his head while he felt another carve a burning groove across his back.

Jebediah rolled while simultaneously levering his gun up. Fast triggering the weapon, it flamed twice, and two rounds exploded low into his target. Savu screamed as his leg broke in half, blown apart at the knee. Jebediah twisted up and fired again and again, screaming as adrenaline lit fire in his blood. The rounds opened a cavern in Savu's belly and blood fountained out. Savu had just enough time to gasp before a final flurry of bullets destroyed the majority of his face.

Jebediah came to his feet with the gun at arms length as he frantically scanned for a target. The room was empty. The door to the back was still swinging from Aashish's retreat. Jebediah charged, shoving the door open with his shoulder.

He arrived to see Aashish yanking a screaming Joanna from her cage. Jebediah triggered his gun and saw the bullet catch Aashish on his arm, spinning him around and making him to release the girl.

"Joanna, this way, behind me, go out the door!" Jebediah yelled. Joanna obeyed and her skinny legs pumped as she sprinted towards freedom. Aashish turned around with one arm bleeding and spied the running girl. Jebediah watched in slow motion as Aashish's hand blurred to his waist, snatched a knife and launched it at her back.

Ohmygod.

Jebediah dropped the gun and threw himself forward as both his outreached arms frantically grabbed for Joanna. He latched onto the front of her shirt and threw her behind him as he pushed himself forward. Aashish's knife slammed into his shoulder and knocked him back. Behind him Joanna scrambled to her feet. She stared at Jebediah, eyes wide with fear and tears streaking her face.

"Go goddammit! Just go!" he yelled. She flew out the door.

Jebediah turned back to Aashish. The other man snarled in frustration as he watched the girl leave. Drawing his knife he stalked towards Jebediah, murder in his eyes. Jebediah reached across, gripped the knife in his shoulder, and, with a sickening rush of pain, dragged it out. He felt it grate against bone, and black dots swam across his vision as he came to his feet.

"Old bastard. I want that knife back," said Aashish.

"Come get it, you kidnapping fuck," said

Jebediah. The two men inverted their blades down across their wrists and with a cry launched themselves at each other.

Aashish powered forward, and his body curbed as the blade angled down and left. Jebediah desperately parried, sweeping his blade across his chest. It collided with Aashish's knife, and sparks flew from the razor edges. Jebediah immediately reversed his motion and whipped a blow towards Aashish's eyes. Aashish swayed back, swift as a cat, and brought his knife straight up. It bounced Jebediah's blow high. Aashish reared back and launched a vicious overhand left into Jebediah's shoulder, pounding his open wound. Jebediah screamed and staggered back.

"I'll get the girl back, of course," Aashish taunted. "Who's going to stop me? You?" He cannoned another fist into Jebediah's face. Blood flew as his head whipped around. Aashish smirked. "I'd be more worried about her grandmother."

Jebediah desperately thrust his knife straight forward. He cried out as his shoulder screamed in pain and failed him. The knife clanged to the ground as his hand reflexively jerked open. He felt the aggregated blows from the bouncers at the club, the abusing fists from Aashish's guards, and the wounds from the titanium blades. He was exhausted, completely spent.

Aashish is right. I'm too damn old, too fucking slow. That girl deserved better than me...

Aashish struck him in the face again, his fist wrapped around the hilt of the knife. It brought Jebediah to his knees. A foot slammed into his chest and dropped him to his back. Aashish knelt down, waving his blade across in the air in mystic patterns.

"I would have returned the girl unharmed. My father's assignment was to just get the money." Aashish contemptuously indicated the shallow bullet wound on his arm. "Because of this, I'm going to hurt her. I'm going to rape her, and then I'm going to gut her. When you're looking up from hell you remember tha..."

Aashish jerked and stopped in midsentence. His eyes rolled up, and he fell forward onto Jebediah. Jebediah shoved him off in confusion. Then he looked up into the wide and scared eyes of Joanna Nguyen. The table leg in her hand was caked with Aashish's blood and hair. She dropped it and ran over to Jebediah, helping him to his feet.

"Is he dead?" she asked. "I didn't mean to kill him."

Jebediah looked down at Aashish's unconscious body. The smart thing to do would be to take a knife and punch it through the man's skull. He looked back at the girl and breathed deep while shaking his head.

"No, you didn't kill him."

Joanna gave him a relieved smile. Jebediah wondered the last time he cared about an enemy dying. He walked over to Aashish and, with a growl, slammed his foot down onto one hand. He heard bones shatter as Joanna cried out in surprise. He stepped to the side and repeated it with Aashish's other hand.

He walked back to Joanna and held out his hand. She looked up at his face, silently considering. "Let's get you back to your grandmother," said Jebediah.

She smiled then and took his hand. He walked her out of the dirty storage room, moving as fast as he could before Aashish woke up. Joanna looked down and then up again, her brow furrowed in a curious look.

"Where's your other shoe?" she asked.

He drove Joanna to Flint, who had promised to deliver her to a waiting grandmother. "I'm moving her and her grandmother immediately. No one will know where they are. We'll get them the best bodyguards that millions of lottery dollars can buy." Flint smiled.

Jebediah looked encouragingly at the girl. She gave him a hug and kissed him on his nose, and then

went to Flint. He picked her up and hugged her as she laid her head on his shoulder. Flint went back to his desk, popped open a metal box with one hand and started flipping out cash.

"Half money for an alive Aashish. That was the deal," said Flint.

"I don't have him. I couldn't bring him in."

"My bounty, my rules," said Flint. "Go get some rest."

Jebediah nodded his thanks. He took the money and limped out the door.

Jebediah slumped forward on the threadbare couch in his apartment. Another shower had washed the blood and gore from his body. Hurried stitches pulled painfully against his shoulder wound. The bounties half money would pay his back rent to full but would leave nothing else. He'd have to work something out with the power company. He looked up as the lights flickered and then winked off completely. Apparently, the power company was done waiting.

He stretched out on the couch and closed his eyes. As the blackness of the unlit room dragged him to an exhausted sleep, he considered a final thought.

I can live in the dark for awhile.



Bones By Liz Fleming
(Charcoal)



happiness

by whitney johnston

i am only happy
on the days
when the litter box is clean



Walking the Pet
By Leonardo Dionisi
(Digital Art)

Ode to Gregor Samsa

By Abbigail Perkins

"As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect."—The Metamorphosis, Franz Kafka

Good morning monstrous vermin!

Oh, grand rodent,
drenched in sweat and dung;
did cracking bones and
solid domes awaken the senses
of your insect mind?

What a pity, for all is well in dreams.

Creep open yellow eyes,
transformed,
a fidgeting, unfamiliar body.
Tart fermented oils,
sheds of shells on the sheets,
an aching shell of a hacking color.

Oh, a pounding at the door,
a roar inside your tiny ears.

Now, a creature hideous and grey,
or is this what you have always been?
Those indecent thoughts you once had
have now become a fleshy wound.

Get up, you're late for work,
and you've missed the train.



Walk By Cassandra Anda

(Mixed Media - Acrylic, Pencil, Charcoal)

Trying to Find My Way

By Darcy D. Hogan

I've been analyzed and criticized, I've flirted with absurd
 Been hypnotized and victimized, been kicked right to the curb
 Got average looks, read lots of books, I studied at "Hard Knocks"
 Got long hair and don't care, thinking outside the box
 I'm wireless and tireless, been known to run all day
 Been stripped bare, been real scared, just trying to find my way
 I've got information and obligations, know where I'm supposed to be
 Made reservations for destinations of places I hope to see
 I've been laid off, been paid off, have looked the other way
 Been out of line, been robbed blind, by fingers in the tray
 Been shot down, been knocked down, but always got back up
 Been inspected and rejected, it's suppose to make you tough
 I've been laughed at, then spat at, for trying to take a stand
 Done good deeds, been real pleased, just being who I am
 I've been foreclosed, been brown-nosed, not sure which one is worse
 I've been real cool, been a real fool, though only one's a curse
 Been blind sided, been absent-minded, forgot just who to be
 Been led astray, and walked away, from people better than me
 I'm home grown and stand alone with these things I have to say
 Though part blind, I've done time, still trying to find my way

Untitled 2

By Karina Rocco

(Silver Gelatin)





Untitled 1 By Karina Rocco
(Silver Gelatin)

Anorexia

By Chey Beattie

After Jane Kenyan's "Having It Out With Melancholy," Part 1: From the Nursery

When she was little, you waited
behind unintentional words of her mother,
and when you found her alone, you forced her
to look into that mirror, poking and grabbing
at all her "flaws," etching uneasiness into every
crevice of her mind.

And as time progressed,
each look, comment, experience, moment
made her weak— even the simple smiles from
her father as he noticed her recent weight loss,
only added the pressure to continue.

You let her believe she could be happy.
You ruined her physically, emotionally
with thoughts she imagined people having:
too fat, not pretty, if only, and looks she
"saw" on the faces of others— disgust.

She only appeared to belong to this world,
to live among happy faces and brown bag
lunches, which both conveniently found
the trash as she entered her room.

She wasn't always yours— the anti-beauty,
the poisoner of minds— but now she will forever be.

Nude Beach

By Natalie Bautista
(Charcoal)



N.I.G.G.A.

By Nesly J. Bonny

We as niggas hold the triggers to the gun show of life. Setting trends, whether you wanna admit it or not, we hot. What was once taboo, miscegenation has become popular pastime in these states. Our colors range from Mariah light to Wesley dark. It started when they first called us niggers; over the years it has shifted from a racial slur to a term of endearment, "My Nigga." Got white kids from burbs bumpin Wayne with no shame. They wanna be me, but they don't wanna Be me. 'Cause to be me means life is les easy. How we have to work twice as hard for the same prize. Life is putting my white voice on anytime somebody lighter than me comes into the room. Life is making damn well sure I say please and thank you anytime they remotely deserve it, 'cause every white person should have at least one positive black experience. Being a nigga puts a lot of stress on you; they often say, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." Well I say, "Being a nigga makes you longer." Black is beautiful, but being a nigga, that's gorgeous .



Zebra By Esteban Peralta
(Digital Photography)

Words

By Brittany Pryce

We speak words
 So we eat words
 We swallow them and spit them back up
 We yell words and sing words
 We have to spell words to write words
 And kiss words goodnight
 I love you and goodbye are the words that we
 Hold on to, I hate you and you make me sick
 Are the words that we regret
 The words that we love and the words that we hate
 We cry words and laugh words
 We pronounce words to understand words
 We listen to words to communicate words

I'm typing these words to keep words
 The main component of our function
 These small words and big words
 Random words and polite words
 Mean words and harsh words
 Sometimes reflect disrespectful words
 This world is spelled with and filled with words
 Without words there would be
 No stories, no sizes, no titles, no directions
 No truths, no lies, no books, no pamphlets
 No cards, no signatures, no letters
 No songwriters, no authors, no poets
 No me...

A Través del Universo

By Kelly Rivera

(Digital Photography)





Tembo By Aubrey Ayala
(Ink)

Homeland Hit

By Nesly J. Bonny

To my country of Haiti

Red dot, circles surrounding like a hurricane
 Category 7, why god? It's such a shame
 Red dots mean gun sight
 Ironical this too means lost life
 How's my dad doing, pray he lands safe on the plane
 Next to it is Dominicana, above that is Cubana
 But now all I see is terror, we need help now, more than ever
 Buildings diminished in the street, elders scatter, children weep
 We were already down, but thanks 'quake, now were beat



House of the Rising Sun By Diane Karmiol
 (Clay)



The Witch, the Angels, and the Goat
By Alberto Silva
(Ink)

Uncontrolled Commotion

By Chey Beattie

I stand in the corner of a small convenience store
checking eggs in blue cartons for any cracks or smells
as a muffled voice shouts to hand over the money.
My body is an anchor, dragging me to the cold tile
floor instantly. Hoping not to attract too much attention,
I cower out of sight before he notices he isn't alone.
The clerk, in disarray, tries reasoning with the perp,
just long enough to try for the panic button, I'm sure.
Commotion ensues, incoherent shouting, shuffled
footsteps, and then, the cock of a sawed-off shot gun.
My eyes grip shut, silent tension consumes, as my
hands fly over my mouth to keep from the gasp
I surely can't release. With my heart a sudden time
bomb, ready to explode, I clutch my purse tight, take
a deep breath, and force myself to carefully look
around the aisle, knowing I have to help. As I focus
in on the scene unfolding, the chime of the front door
is heard. My lungs constrict, no longer allowing air
to flow through, I've lost hope of a happy ending.
With the unexpected distraction, the clerk raises her arm,
pulls the trigger of her 38mm, and collapses onto
the racks stacked behind her. I stare, in shock, unsure
of what I just witnessed, until I remember the chime.
I gather myself and leap up to call the police as I see
a family standing in the entrance. The mother, a lioness,
lets out a loud screech and shields the eyes of her cubs,
protecting her family from something that can't be undone.



Untitled By Grant Gardner
(Silver Gelatin)



The Worried King
By Leonardo Dionisi
(Digital Art)

Freedom in Motion
By Lisa Lueng-Tat
(Digital Photography)





Untitled By Adam Roja
(Ink)

Christmas, Baby

By Ben Gines

I was five when my brother died. I never knew him. He enlisted in the war in '42. Three years later, there was a knock at the front door. I remember because I was the one that opened it, stretching so I could reach the knob.

Behind me, Mom called out in that tone mothers have that can make you feel two inches tall and make you want to wet your pants at the same time. I remember her hand on my shoulder, gently pulling me from the door and nudging me back towards the living room where I had been trying to put my brother's Lionel trains together.

I could hear the hushed voices of my mom and the Western Union man. There was a "Thank you, Ma'am" and then silence as Mom walked into the living room. Slowly. She tore the envelope open and pulled out a piece of folded paper. Her lips moved as she read, and I saw her clutch her throat.

"Mommy?"

She gave a little choke and then looked out at the window and bit her lower lip while large, fat tears fell from her eyes.

I felt her scoop me up as I approached, and she squeezed me hard. I didn't understand why she was crying. But I understood that, in that moment, she needed me.

My parents never really talked much about Billy. At least, not to me. But I could hear her. Late at night. My room was opposite of what eventually became the shrine of a boy I knew only in pictures.

* * *

Sitting on the floor, I ate my Swanson TV dinner while watching the end of the news on the new black and white set Mom won in a church raffle.

It was Monday, December 23, 1957.

In the corner of the room, a live Christmas tree was covered in tinsel, garland and bubble lights. It was bare underneath. Mom and Dad insisted on putting the gifts out after Midnight Mass, after I'd gone to sleep, or pretended to. After midnight was when Santa came. Never mind that I was going to be 17 in two days.

Yeah. A Christmas baby.

"Honey? We're supposed to be there at eight!"

Dad called as he walked into the living room smelling

of aftershave. One of his colleagues at the university was throwing a Christmas party.

Dad peeked out the window. It had been snowing for a few hours now. He grumbled about it as he crossed my view and sat down in his chair. From a drawer in the table beside him, he pulled out a small pouch and his pipe.

The seven o'clock news went back to Elvis and the draft notice he had received just three days before. A Christmas episode of American Bandstand was up next.

"I don't know how you can listen to that garbage," Dad mumbled as he lit the tobacco. The pipe clicked against his teeth as he spoke.

"C'mon, Dad. Don't be so square." I rolled my eyes. "It's what everybody's listening to!"

"In my day, we listened to *real* music," Dad started, but I tuned him out. I hated when he talked about how everything was much better when he was my age.

But Dad was 57. Buddy Holly and Fats Domino were about as foreign to him as the Andrew Sisters were to me.

"So? How do I look?" Mom walked into the room and spun around slowly, patting at her hair with one hand. She looked like Beaver's mom in that new show.

I don't know why but, in that moment, with her sad smile and the odd look in her eyes, she looked so pretty to me. So lonely in her pain. I knew she was thinking of Billy.

"You look beautiful." Dad got up from his chair and gave her a kiss.

"Everything is brand new! Got a discount from Mr. Hart, even though I'm not starting my job until after New Year's. Wasn't that nice of him?"

"Ah-yuh," Dad muttered and rummaged through the closet for their coats. He slipped his on and then helped Mom with hers. "I'll go start the car. It'll be colder than a witch's—"

"Harold!"

"Right," Dad mumbled and walked out.

"Honey?" Mom turned to me. "Sure you won't change your mind?"

"No, Mom," I said patiently. Inside, though, I was getting antsy. I didn't want to go to some dumb party when the November issue of Playboy, with Linda Vargas on the cover, was waiting between my mattress and box spring. Tommy Smith had lent it to me after he'd stuck some of the pages together.

"Okay, darling. Don't stay up late. And if you want, I made an extra Boston cream pie." Mom kissed me on the cheek. She smelled of lavender.



Tears of the Sky By Juan Sebastian Maldonado
(Digital Photography)

And just like that, they were gone.

I scoffed down the rest of my TV dinner, crumpled up the aluminum tray, and ran to the kitchen to wash the fork. Then I ran back, turned off the set, and looked out the window to make sure they were *really* gone. I could see the tire tracks from the old Buick in the driveway. In the street, Dad changed gears and Mom smiled and waved before they drove away.

* * *

Something was different as I woke up Christmas Eve morning. I knew it even before I got out of bed.

I didn't hear Dad shuffling about. Didn't smell his coffee bubbling in the percolator or his pipe as he made his way to, what he called, his first visit to the library before work.

Mom wasn't humming. I didn't smell the frying Spam, didn't hear the pops as she fried eggs.

I threw my legs over the side of the bed, yawned, and then stretched. My feet found my slippers, and I reached for the flannel robe draped over the back of my desk chair. I shrugged it on and

wrapped the sash around my waist.

As I headed for the door I caught the Playboy magazine out of the corner of my eyes. I shoved it under the bed, opened the door to my room, and shuffled past Billy's room.

"Mom? Dad?" I called out. I knocked on the bathroom door, and then opened it. Empty. I shuffled to the toilet and peed.

"Mom? Dad?" I knocked lightly on their bedroom door after washing my hands and leaving the bathroom.

No answer. I went to open their door, but my hand stopped in mid-air. I suddenly remembered the night I walked in on them. It was an image I could never really erase from my memory. One that sent shivers down my spine and made me want to make a face. No one I knew ever wanted to see his or her parents doing it. It was... like... wrong. No one over 30 should be doing that sort of thing!

I knocked again, louder this time. Still no answer.

CONTINUED

I opened the door. Slowly. In case they were going at it and had not heard me. I cleared my throat and let out a pretend cough for good measure.

But the bedroom was empty, the bed not slept in. I closed the door quietly behind me and made my way down the stairs.

"Mom? Dad?" I stepped into the kitchen. The percolator wasn't even out. I knew then something was wrong. Dad would never leave the house without having at least one cup of coffee.

I hurried to the front door, unlocked it, and yanked it open. Outside, it was as if a Currier & Ives print had come to life. But I couldn't appreciate the beauty of a still morning after a fresh snow. All I could do was stand there, gaping at the driveway. Dad's car wasn't there.

Mom and Dad hadn't come home.

* * *

Noon. I sat in the living room, waiting, half expecting them to show up. The silence hurt my ears.

I glanced at Dad's chair, expecting him to materialize, when a car door slammed outside. I ran to the window, thinking they were finally home.

But it was only the Walker's across the street, home from a shopping expedition.

And then I heard the rumbling.

I went to the door, opened it, and stepped outside. It had grown colder. I stood there shivering, as a motorcycle turned the corner, sped up a little, and then slowed as it turned into our driveway.

The man on the motorcycle had thick, brown hair. It was slicked back. He wore a leather jacket, dark sunglasses, and a lit cigarette in his lips.

This is my uncle? I thought; this guy was... cool! I knew he was younger than Mom but since we weren't supposed to talk about him, there wasn't much else I knew of him.

Uncle Bill had called earlier and was surprised when I answered the phone. Usually Mom did. That was her job. When I told Uncle Bill my parents hadn't come home, he said he would be right over.

And there he was. My Uncle Bill. He flicked the cigarette butt into the snow.

"John?" The strange man asked as he took off his gloves and slipped them into a zippered pocket. We looked at each other for what felt like a very long time. What do you say to a man you've never met?

A man you knew very little about except for what Mom always said after she hung up from their brief conversations... *Uncle Bill says hello...* in the false, cheery voice she sometimes had.

But at that moment I would have given anything to hear her voice: cheery, false, or otherwise.

"That's me." I nodded.

"Nice to finally meet you, John." There was a hint of a smile on his face as he came up the stairs. "Last time I saw you was at your brother's funeral."

He was younger than I had imagined. I felt a bit awkward, and I could tell he felt the same. Because I felt I should say something and didn't know exactly what, I, stupidly, said the first thing that came to mind.

"You look like James Dean."

Uncle Bill laughed. It was an easy laugh. Warm. Friendly. I liked him instantly.

"Have you heard from the police?"

"Not yet." I shook my head. There was another awkward moment where it seemed we were both deciding whether or not to shake hands.

"Are you too old for a hug?" Uncle Bill finally asked.

I suddenly didn't trust myself to speak. I shook my head, gave a little laugh, and forced myself not to cry as he wrapped his arms around me. I hugged him back. The leather

jacket was cold on my face, and the zipper stung my cheek. But I didn't care. I felt I could breathe again.

"Your mom's told me a lot about you," Uncle Bill said as he pulled away, sniffed dramatically, and then turned his head and dabbed at his eyes.

"Really?" I wished I could have said the same.

"Know what I think?" Uncle Bill exclaimed with a big grin. I shrugged, grateful to have someone to talk to. Even someone I knew little about.

"I think we should go into the kitchen, put some coffee on the stove, and get to know each other a bit. What do you think?" He put a big, strong hand on my shoulder and squeezed.

"Sure." I gave Uncle Bill a weak smile, looked in his eyes again, and led the way.

* * *

If there was something wrong with Uncle Bill, I couldn't see it. He was friendly, hip, and easy to talk to. He was up on all the new music, went to the movies regularly, and read a lot of books. He told me about a brand new one he picked up on his last trip to

**"I'M NOT QUITE
SURE WHAT I WAS
EXPECTING. THAT
HE HAD COMMITTED
MURDER? THEFT?
RAPE? SOME OTHER
HEINOUS CRIME?"**

New York City. Written by some guy named Kerouac. Something about the road.

"This one's going down in history!" Uncle Bill said with excitement. "I can feel it. If you like, I'll lend it to you when I'm done." Uncle Bill sat across the kitchen table from me and lit up a Newport.

That was when the knock came.

We both stopped the conversation, looked at each other as if to mentally comfort the other, and stood. I ran to the door, Uncle Bill behind me.

I swallowed nervously when I saw the grim look on Officer Brown's face.

"May I come in?" the man asked cautiously.

"Sure." I stepped aside, feeling an odd coldness inside I hadn't felt before. Beside me, I could feel Uncle Bill bristle.

"Officer Brown," he said, almost uncomfortably.

"William," the man replied with a slight nod, avoiding my Uncle's gaze. I thought there was discomfort in the policeman's voice. I looked at them curiously. There was a sort of defiance in my Uncle and a stiffness to Officer Brown.

"Uh... I think maybe you should sit down," Officer Brown said and then cleared his throat. He walked into the living room and we followed. Uncle Bill sat in Dad's chair. I sat on the sofa, where Mom usually sat, still in my pajamas and robe.

"I'm afraid I have bad news," Officer Brown started. I looked up at him and swallowed again, praying I hadn't heard what he just said.

"Your parents... they're... uh... they were in an accident."

"What kind of accident?" Uncle Bill asked.

"Looks like they swerved on Ingram Road. Drove right into the lake. The car was pulled out just a short while ago."

This must have been what Mom felt like, that day she got the telegram, I thought. And in that moment, it was as if I was 5-years-old again. Scared all of a sudden. Cold. I couldn't breathe. Guilt, such as I had never felt before, brought a knot to my throat and tears to my eyes. I looked down, afraid that if I didn't, I would start to bawl like a little girl.

"Oh god," I muttered and suddenly felt queasy.

I jumped up and ran. I took the stairs two at a time, hand over my mouth, barely making it to the bathroom. On my knees before the toilet, I retched uncontrollably.

And my emotions told me who was boss.

Odd how there are moments in life when you somehow detach from yourself. I could feel my lips tremble. I felt the sharp intake of breathe, the heaviness that came with the knowledge that my

parents were dead. But it was as if it were happening to someone else.

If I had known I'd never see them again, I wouldn't have been so quick to judge Dad and his taste in music. I wouldn't have been so quick to call him square. I wouldn't have been so eager for them to leave just so I could sneak up to my room and beat off to pictures of naked women.

I might have pushed more to know about Billy rather than dropping him like some subject at school.

I would have told them to enjoy themselves, to have a good time. I would have told them how much I appreciated them. Wished them a Merry Christmas.

Most of all, I would have held them close- as close and as tightly as Mom hugged me that day she got the telegram.

And I would have told them I loved them.

* * *

Somewhere in the foggy distance of my brain, I thought I heard someone knock. I was barely aware of someone sitting at the edge of my bed, and I thought Mom was there. I felt her cool touch on my forehead and then felt her lips brush my forehead.

"Mom?" I stirred, blinking my eyes against the light from the hallway. The bedroom door was cracked open, and I could smell the turkey cooking in the kitchen. My stomach growled.

"No, buddy. It's Uncle Bill." A soft, quiet voice in the dark. And it all rushed back to me. Outside, Christmas Eve was in full swing, but my parents wouldn't be there to enjoy it. They wouldn't be there to celebrate my birthday.

No Mom to lay the turkey and dressing on the platter. No Dad to carve the meat and playfully fight me for the wishbone.

I sat up in bed and threw my arms around Uncle Bill, in a temporary moment of weakness as the shock of it came back to me. He hugged me back, a hand cradling the back of my head.

"I'm scared, Uncle Bill," I confessed and couldn't help but feel ashamed as tears flowed again. Embarrassed, I pulled away.

"What do I do now? I don't... know... anything."

I didn't know how to cook. I had no job to pay for the house. I hadn't even graduated high school!

"Hey, now. Relax!" Uncle Bill chuckled, got up, and flipped on the light switch by the door. He sat back down beside me. His eyes were red, like he'd been crying also. And they were glassy.

"You're not alone. I'll help you. That is... if you

CONTINUED

let me."

"Why wouldn't I?"

"That," Uncle Bill said as he stood, "is a story for another time. Right now, the only decision you need to make is what to wear. Dinner's ready."

"You cook?" I blurted.

"No need to sound surprised," he said, playfully hurt. "There's a lot you don't know about me."

"Apparently," I replied throwing back the covers.

"I'm a guy with many... rare qualities," Uncle Bill quipped, sounding like someone I'd heard in the movies.

I gave Uncle Bill an odd look as he turned and headed for the door.

"Uncle Bill?" I called out.

"Yeah?" He turned, hand on the door. I smiled and found myself grateful he was there. Only I couldn't quite find the words.

"C'mon, kid," he said in jest. "I've got a glass of eggnog downstairs with my name on it, and the ice is melting!"

I chuckled. If nothing else he made a lot of funny, but queer, statements.

"Thanks for being here," I said finally.

Uncle Bill took a deep breath and sighed. He smiled weakly, nodded, and stepped out of the room.

* * *

Dinner was delicious. The turkey was moist and juicy, the gravy thick and creamy. Even the mashed potatoes were buttery, not lumpy.

"Sorry about the cranberry, kid. Usually I don't like canned, but it was all I could find in the house." Uncle Bill kicked back, tapped his pack of Newport's on the table, and unwrapped the cellophane.

"Can I have one of those?" I asked. He looked at me as he flipped his lighter open. Then, after sucking down a long puff, Uncle Bill tossed me the package.

I could feel his eyes on me as I imitated what he'd done. Then I took a deep drag and coughed like mad. The smoke I inhaled made my head reel, and I thought I would pass out.

"You're not supposed to take *that* much of a hit! Especially the first time around," Uncle Bill said, getting up and slapping me on the back.

"Thanks!" I replied sarcastically as I choked in between coughs. I put the cigarette out immediately. "I think I'll stick to Boston cream pie instead."

"Atta boy! Tell you what. Help me clear the table and get the dishes done," Uncle Bill suggested, "and then we'll go for a quick walk to clear our heads. When we come



Cock of the Walk By Nery Mejicano III
(Oil on Canvas)

back, you can have all the pie you want, and *I'll* have more eggnog!"

* * *

We wound up walking into town. Everything was lit. In the Town Square, the Christmas tree reached more than 15 feet. Carolers sang in the streets, and snow flurries fell as we stopped to look at the scene, like Ebenezer Scrooge and The Ghost of Christmas Past.

"I used to love Christmas," Uncle Bill said suddenly. His face was pensive, his eyes far away.

"Used to?"

"Yeah. Used to. Until Chip Sanders told me Santa didn't exist. I cried for days when my parents finally confessed the truth. I felt so... *let down!*" Uncle Bill laughed and shook his head. "Of course, your mom was great."

"How do you mean?"

"Christmas Eve she came into my room."

Uncle Bill started to laugh. "She was... she was..."

But the more he thought about it, he laughed even harder. "She was dressed as Santa... put on Dad's old suit and... oh god! She *really* wanted to believe. She wanted me to, as well. She finally gave up 'cause I just shook my head at her the entire time."

Uncle Bill stopped laughing. He looked at the manger at the base of the tree, his eyes glazed and distant.

"And you know what she said then?"

"No, what?"

"She said, 'Just because Santa doesn't exist doesn't mean you have to be mean about it. What if Santa is a feeling? What if it's just about making someone else feel good?'"

I don't know why but it brought tears to my eyes. Perhaps because it sounded like the kind of thing she'd say. Or maybe it was because she would no longer be there to sooth and comfort me when I was troubled.

From the other side of the Square, I heard the church organ grinding up.

"You want to attend Midnight Mass?" I asked. The flurries suddenly turned into outright snow.

"I'm not much of a church goer. But you go ahead. I'll wait here." Uncle Bill rewrapped his scarf and turned the collar up on his leather jacket. He hunched his shoulders and shoved his hands deep into his pockets.

Something about the way he started fidgeting made me wonder about what happened, why we couldn't talk about him. I wondered why Mom was allowed to speak to him over the phone but wasn't allowed to visit. And why was it that Officer Brown

had been so strange when he saw Uncle Bill? How could 14 years go by without ever seeing him as I grew up? I mean it was Bangor, Maine. It wasn't exactly a big city like Boston or New York.

"Uncle Bill?"

"Yeah, kid?"

"What happened? Between you and Mom. And Dad."

Uncle Bill looked around, suddenly uncomfortable.

"Listen, Johnny. I really don't think this is... uh... the best place to, you know, talk about this stuff." I saw him swallow. "It's... complicated. You wouldn't understand."

"I'll make you a deal," I replied. Uncle Bill cast his eyes down at me. "I'm going to go in that church and light a candle for my parents. When I come out, we can head back home, and you can tell me all about it over that Boston cream pie and eggnog you promised me."

Uncle Bill mulled it over.

"Deal?" I pointed a gloved finger at him.

He gave me a weak smile and nodded.

* * *

I'm not quite sure what I was expecting. That he had committed murder? Theft? Rape? Some other heinous crime? He was gay. I didn't get it. So he was happy. Where was the harm in that?

But when he said in a hushed tone that he was *that way*, it all hit me. I understood why Dad was the way he was and why Mom, despite my dad, still remained in touch with him.

"You see, Johnny. Your mom and me, we were raised that family is the most important thing in the world. It's the only thing we have. You can have tons of friends, but when the chips are down, family is all you have. Oh, they can drive you crazy! But they're the only ones that will take you in. Your dad on the other hand... he forbid her to see me. But she'd sneak a visit in now and then."

"So, you're... a..." I trailed off.

"A faggot," Uncle Bill finished neatly.

I made a face and shook my head. All those years of laughing at other boys who were called that. All those times I thought to use the word, or actually said it. I never realized before just how disgusting and horrible a word it really was.

There was no way my Uncle, the man who sat in Dad's chair, drunk from the last of the eggnog- and now working on straight up rum- was *one of those*.

There had to be a better word.

CONTINUED

"I'm a homosexual."

And just like that, with three little words, the carefully cultivated and insulated world I lived in was completely and irrevocably shattered. The manicured lawn turned brown, the Norman Rockwell in the frame over the television went askew, and the image I had of my parents shifted.

Funny the things you find out after a loved one dies.

I couldn't help but feel there was more he wasn't telling me. It was hard to swallow the news, but it wasn't like it was a crime. Was it?

"On the night your brother was buried," Uncle Bill continued, "I needed some company. Someone to hold me... tell me the sadness would pass." Uncle Bill sighed.

"What's that got to do with being a fa... I mean, a hom..." I stammered. But no matter what word I chose they made him sound so sick. So depraved.

"We prefer the word *gay*."

"Gay," I said, taking a deep breath and letting it out like a burp. "What's the deal with Officer Brown?"

Uncle Bill cleared his throat and thought a moment.

"He was, uh... my arresting officer."

"Arresting officer?"

Uncle Bill looked at me. I could see plainly that he was nervous. As difficult as it was to absorb and accept, it must have been even more difficult to tell someone, especially me, considering the circumstances.

"I'm sorry, kid. I really can't... It's so lurid even I find it disgusting."

We sat in silence.

"Hey!" Uncle Bill chimed up suddenly, after a lull. "It's Christmas, baby!"

I looked at the starburst clock ticking away on the wall. We had been talking for so long I hadn't noticed it was nearly three in the morning.

"What do you say to opening some presents?"

"I don't know, Uncle Bill. I'm kinda tired."

"Not even your birthday present? I found it earlier, when you were sleeping. I needed something to do while I was cooking dinner, so I snooped around and found all the Christmas Gifts."

Mom always wanted me to have something special, instead of just rolling my birthday together with the birth of Christ.

Just because you're a Christmas baby doesn't mean you're going to be treated any less special, I remember Mom telling me one year.

I missed her so much. It was like an ache in my heart. Like something had been ripped out of my

soul. I tried not to think of her. Tried not to think of Dad, who I know loved me as well, even if he was sometimes surly about it.

I watched Uncle Bill get up. He carefully made his way to the coat closet in the hallway, opened it, and pulled out a package wrapped in birthday paper. An envelope was taped to it.

Uncle Bill teetered as he approached, and I laughed. He flopped down on the couch beside me, handed me the package and quietly said, "Happy Birthday, Johnny boy."

"Thanks," I said automatically and took the package.

I plucked the envelope Mom had taped to the paper and opened it. I pulled out an outdoorsy card. A fishing pole. A basket. A young man playing with a dog. I couldn't help the little snort that escaped me.

"What?" Uncle Bill jumped beside me. His eyes had closed, and he was fading fast.

I opened the card, and a crisp tenner fell into my lap. It was the most money I'd ever seen. Then I read the inscription:

To my beloved son, I know you don't fish. I know we don't have a dog, but I couldn't find a card that quite fit you. I got this one for the verse. So you know how much you mean to us. Have a wonderful birthday. Love, Mom and Dad.

P.S. I hope you buy some of the music you like to listen to.

I felt her presence as I read and re-read what she wrote. I know she wanted me to read the verse, but her words meant more to me than anything someone in an office could have expressed.

Out of the corner of my eye I could tell Uncle Bill had already fallen asleep.

I weighed the package in my hand. A book.

I tore at the paper and was stunned to see the title, "On The Road" by Jack Kerouac. There were some provocative images along the sides and bottom of the cover. In the background, some kind of church, an old car driving up a hill. In the center, a young man wore what looked like a pair of Chinos, a horizontally striped shirt. His hands were in his pockets.

And then I had a strange thought. The illustration bore an odd resemblance to me or, rather, what I thought I'd look like in about five years or so.

I flipped the book to the first page and read: *I first met Dean not long after my wife and I split up. I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won't bother to talk about, except that it had something to do*

with the miserably weary split-up and my feeling that everything was dead.

That's when I broke. I sat there quietly and wept. For Mom. For Dad. For all those wasted years I never bothered to learn about my brother. I wept for Uncle Bill and whatever demons he carried. And I wept for a world where people could be brushed aside and cast away simply because they were different.

Mostly, though, I think I wept for myself and the knowledge that, no matter what happened from that point on, I'd never have Dad to give me advice on girls or what to do when I finally went out on a date. No Mom to make me chicken soup and grilled cheese sandwiches or take my temperature and sit beside me, keeping watch over me when I was sick.

I put the book, my birthday card, and the crisp bill on the cocktail table and then looked at Uncle Bill. He looked peaceful. I only hoped I looked that way

when I finally went to sleep.

I wondered if Uncle Bill would be willing to move in? Would it cramp his style? Would it cramp mine? And what would people say when they found out we were living together?

So many questions, so much to talk about, so much to learn. But Uncle Bill was right. I didn't have to decide right then and there. I had some time.

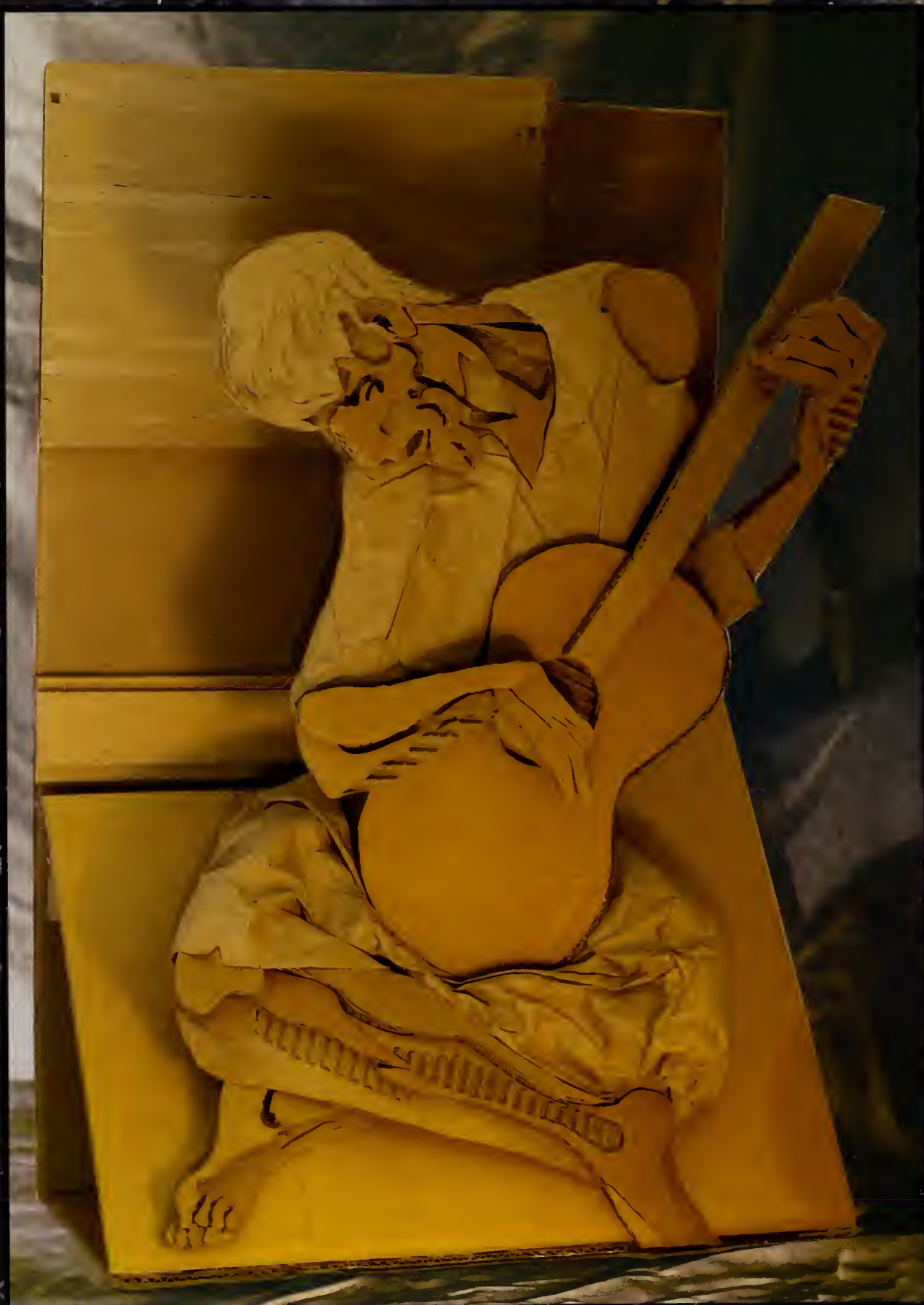
As carefully as I could, I laid my estranged uncle out on the couch. Then I grabbed one of the throws from the crate by the sofa and draped it over my last living relative. As an afterthought, I tucked the blanket in, the way Mom used to do.

"Merry Christmas, baby," he mumbled in his sleep.

I smiled in the dark and walked out of the living room. As I climbed the stairs, I thought to myself, *Yeah, Merry fucking Christmas, baby.*



Un Bel Di Vedremo By Whitney Johnston
(Digital Photography)



Brown Guitar By Aubrey Ayala
(Cardboard)

Dear winter

By Patrick Mondesir

If I hold back my tears, mind would probably flood,
 All the dirty thoughts I have would then turn to mud,
 I see my life flashflood, right before my eyes,
 the water could fill a tub if I broke down and cried,
 And I do, releasing all of my sorrows and pains,
 Now I see my emotions are a circling the drain,
 I hate expressing my feelings,
 The questions and comments I get while I'm revealing,
 Makes me feel awkward,
 But what really hurts is to speak and go unheard,
 One word... Emotions,
 Three words... I hate them,
 So many things can ~~prove~~ provoke them,
 I wish I could erase them,
 They are written on my face,
 Every gesture displays them,
 I have tried to hold them in but I cannot contain them,
 I guess I have to except it,
 It's time to start writting these letters...

Dear winter, I'm so ~~cold~~ cold, I envy your warmth, and you know, come and cover me with your blanket of snow, because everyone knows my heart is so cold, I am colder than winter, and I wish I were winter, so I could be warmer.



Growing

By Jio Nadal

(Mixed Media -
Dyed Gesso, Pen, Ink)

My Imagination

By Samantha Schoenfeld

This is the place I go to at night.
Alone in my bed.

Walking to my car.

Sitting in class.

Eating dinner at Applebee's.

This is the place that never goes away.

A world in my head.

Characters...

Stories...

Jumbled up inside my head,

Waiting to put onto paper.

This is a place I long for.

My escape from this world.

It is my world.

It is my imagination.

This is my place.

Ophelia's song

By Alina Fedor

behind the flowered meadow hides the sea
the water's edge in curling ribbon flows
in silence, lovingly envelop me
the sea, the sky, deserted moon that glows

beneath, inside the layers in the waves
the ocean hums a lullaby so dear
below, there are no faces and no graves
the water thickens dark, yet shore is near

in deep below the sunlight slowly thins
I grew a fishtail, fins and seal-skin balm
the masses merging with the ocean's skins
my lungs are now for holding ocean's calm

down where the shoreline ends abrupt and steep
below, the seaweeds wave in waters as I sleep

Seaweed

By Lennish

(Digital Photography)





From Your Heart to Your Pelvis
By Julian Pardo
(Sculpture)



When Love Died By Alina Fedor
(Mixed Media - Glue with Woodchips, Acrylics)

Ur-In-At-I-On: I Love it

By Dominique Grooms

Aaah! Ugh! Yes! Wooo!

What a relief

I needed you bad

Early in the morning

You do justice

Starting the day right

Gold or Clear

No one knows me

Like you do

Physiologically my Central

Automatic Somatic Nervous System

Are in coordination

Ready to regulate my

Brain and tell

My Pontine Mituration Center

To Pee my

Central Cortex into the

Urinal Bowl in

The nasty Public Restroom

Voiding the Urethra

Into the shaft where

I feel rejoiced

Damn peeing makes me

Just let go

As a child

You were listening to

My Involuntary Reflex

Doing what you wanted

I had to

Train you very well

Now you do

What bladder tells you

Males for a

Quick piss they will

Go anywhere like

Walls, Bushes, or Gates

Will do the trick

Pull little man

Out drip, drip

Then shake or squeeze

Until the tinkle

Is out of system

Zip up pants

And get back to

Playing ball

Females are amateurs

Having to alter their

Body to pee

Will do it in

Bottles, Side-Road, Wee-Wee Pots

(Wow Ladies Are Fucking DISGUSTING)

Hand-Sanitizers for the

Cleaner girls but

Bacteria, Germs, and U.T.I.'s

For the dirty ones

Wipe it off good

Then get back

To the daily life

But when I get

Older in life

Who is going to

Help with Emission

No pampers for me

I'd rather sit

On the toilet to

Potty without problems

It may take me

A very long

Time to get it

Going but nevertheless

Eventually it all will

Come out and

When it does I

Will be thankful

Urination is the

First thing you do

In the morning

And the last thing

In the evening

Ask anyone about it

And they will

Tell you that they

LOVE TO URINATE

A Strange Kind of Love By Whitney Johnston (Silver Gelatin)



Shakespeare's Sister By Whitney Johnston (Silver Gelatin)

Todo Lo Que Necesitas Es Amor By Kelly Rivera (Digital Photography)



Mirlo By Kelly Rivera (Digital Photography)



Venice By Esteban Peralta
(Digital Photography)

The Morning Shadows Dance Begun

By Kyle Yaeger

it's never so much a poem as a story
the thin lines fade as we move into mourning
those pages filled with notes and glory

as we depress ourselves more into the future
the past begets yet another suture
and we lift away the veil to see the puncture

never so much a tear has dropped
with shaded eyes our lips once sought
a kiss forever now gone
forgot

a memory of a thousand thoughts
each one a wound I once had got
now scarred and bleeding the cut resides
a pint of blood is lost
benign

the shallow lakes and pools amidst
some filled with water
and mine with this

fish now drown in the red water
a sea of blood
a mound of thunder

my body falls into the pit
my mind collapsed
my heart hath ripped

I see no end against this life
there is no rain
can you feel the plight

a shallow grave beneath the sun
the morning shadow's dance begun
alas the sun hath rose again
my body forgotten
a life hath end



Coffee and Cigarettes By Esteban Peralta
(Digital Photography)

Meet the Staff



Jeannette Fernandez
Literary Editor

Not pictured:

Dr. Patrick Ellingham,
Advisor

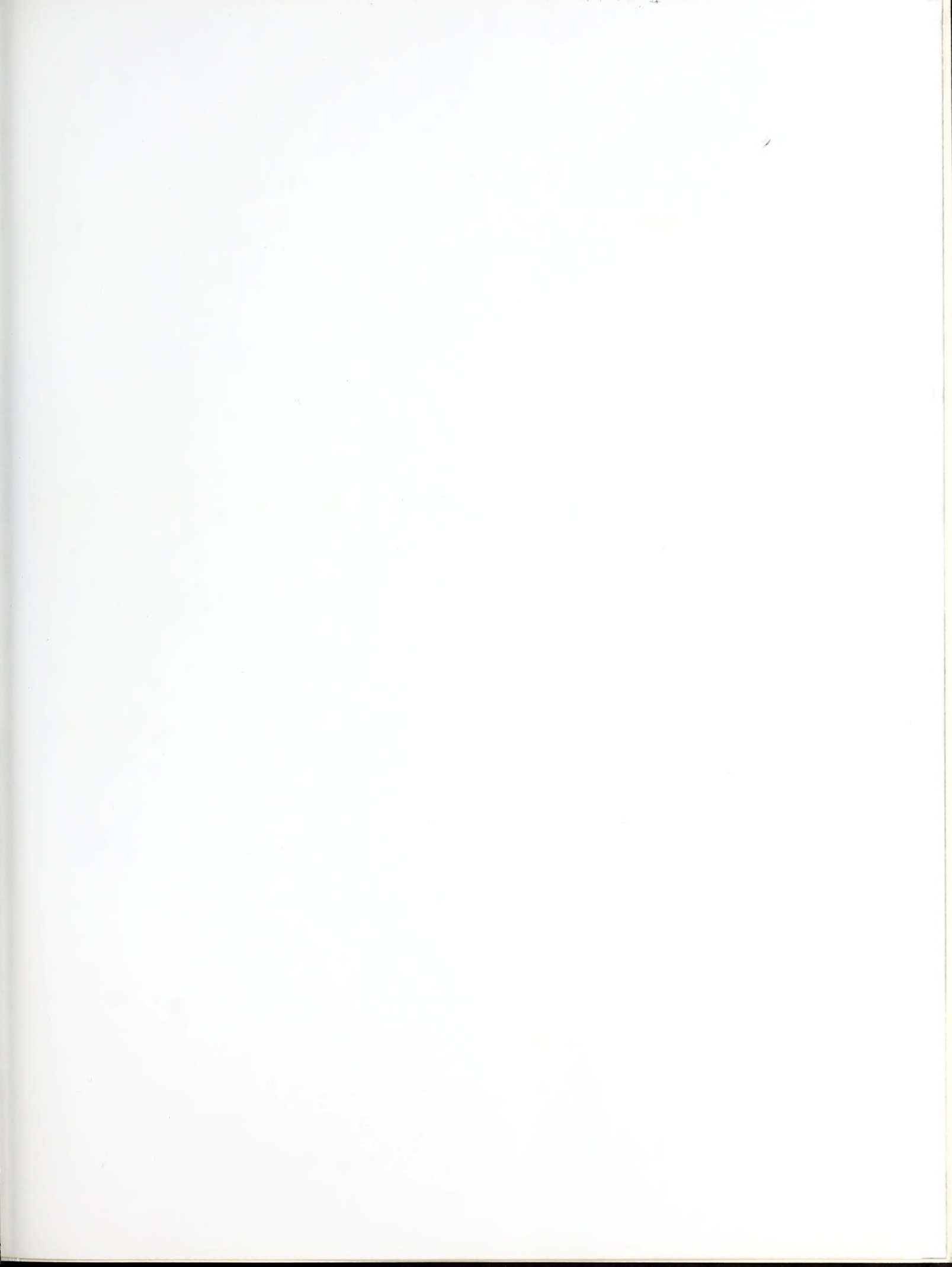


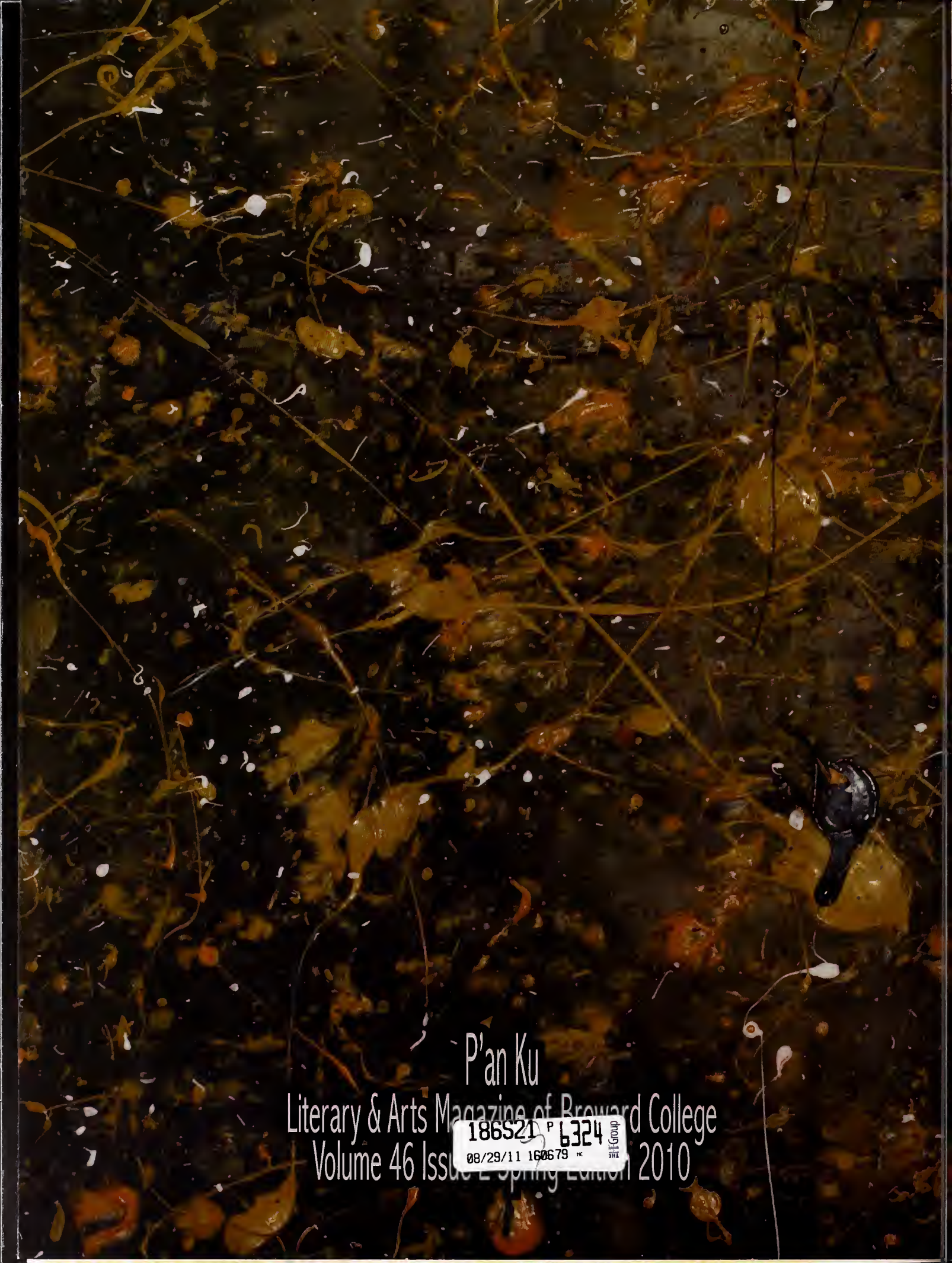
Whitney Johnston
Editor in Chief



Adam Rojas
Art Editor

3 staff + 1 honorary \leq Liz
Fleming \div 1 month \times 64 pages
+ 30 stories (including some
5,000 worders) + Over 100 poems
+ Lots of artwork submitted,
even more tracked down - A week
of no sleep, IT problems, and an
unhealthy amount of caffeine
and cigarettes = This magazine





P'an Ku

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